Hertfordshire Orienteering Club
informally known as Happy Herts

Club report for 2025-2026 (Sept 2026)

Introduction - Ben Bardsley, Club Chair

2025-26 has been a year where the club has put itself on the national stage and delivered a highly successful doubleheader event, including Level A British Night Championships alongside our regular major event of the year, the Ace of Herts. A huge thank you to all in the club at all levels for their contributions to this weekend. You all did the club proud and, despite some heavy rain and last-minute parking contingencies, the events ran wonderfully well.

As well as that Major event, the club has run a full Saturday Series, with Neil as Events Coordinator (now also assisted by David Kingdon) preparing a programme which has tried to bring in variety, new areas and something for all, whilst also attracting newcomers to the club. In addition, HH was also on the national stage in St Albans, for the October 2025 Urban event, part of the UK Urban League as part of a collaborative doubleheader urban weekend with WAOC. Finally, we've again come to the end of an excellent and well-attended Street-O series, again with some new locations and an intriguing Monopoly format to end the season.

All of these have required input from the club's army of volunteers: Organisers, Planners, Controllers, Mappers and Day Helpers, as well as much other behind-the-scenes activity from many club members. A huge Thank You to everyone who falls into any of those categories for helping to make all of these events happen. What has been especially pleasing this year, and again this is thanks to those in the club who have volunteered their time to do this, is to see a large number of new Planner, Organisers and Controllers, for both Saturday Series and Street-O events. Well done to all those new Officials for giving it a go and helping the club out, alongside a big Thank You to the trainers.

On the training front, as well as the specific Officials' training, Alex and team have put on a schedule of training events, linked to the Saturday Series venues, further developing our club orienteers. A big Thank You to Alex and all his team who have put these training events on.

Many HH club members have been successful during the year, winning medals in individual and relay categories at big events, as well as being successful in races and leagues around Europe and in the UK. Congratulations to all successful runners from the club. Congratulations also to all Club Champions as well as the winner of the club trophies (Harding, Farmer and Marsden), with a special mentioned for Roger Moulding, who has been awarded the Harding Trophy for decades of service to the club. Congratulations Roger!

As a club, we have also reached the Compass Sport Cup Final in 2026, which will be held in October, south of the M25 giving the club an opportunity for a strong finish in this competition.

Finally, to all the Club Officers, core committee members Hedley, Hugh, Tom and Neil, along with the rest of the committee, helpers and others who help to run the club in all ways, a big Thank You to all of you too. To our members, I hope you have found the programme this year to be interesting and challenging, and that you've enjoyed all your orienteering. Thank you to all of you for helping make the club what it is.

Membership – Susan Marsden, Membership Secretary and Hedley Calderbank, Secretary

Club membership has stayed broadly stable, with small increases in both senior and junior membership and a halving in the number of lapsed members compared with most previous years. The committee continues to pursue initiatives to improve recruitment and reduce turnover. Every new club member receives a personalised welcome email with an invitation to contact Becky Raftery for information and support beyond the (newly improved) Newcomers section of the HH website. British Orienteering has launched a new membership dashboard which will enable easier analysis of membership trends.

New members	Senior	Junior	Total
2026*	**15**	**6**	**21**
2025	8	4	12
2024	16	7	23
2023	8	8	16
2022	16	11	27
2021	31	21	52
2020	21	19	40
2019	38	53	91
2018	23	33	56

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Total members	Senior	Junior	Total
2026*	**148**	**59**	**207**
2025	139	56	195
2024	140	70	210
2023	141	68	209
2022	148	69	217
2021	161	89	250
2020	158	92	250
2019	153	115	268
2018	137	102	239
2017	130	107	237
Lapsed members	**Senior**	**Junior**	**Total**
2025#	**6**	**8**	**14**
2024	16	15	31
2023	18	10	28
2022	12	15	27
2021	29	31	60
2020	28	24	52
2019	16	42	58
2018	22	40	62
2017	16	38	54

*Figures up to August 2026

2025 Lapsed members are those who failed to renew in January 2026.

Events summary – Neil Gostick, Events Co-ordinator

This year has been a successful year events wise for the club. We have held the British Night Championships, Ace of Herts, St. Albans UK Urban League event, GLOSS, and a good range of Saturday Series. Plus a full programme of Summer Street O and Training events.

A large and broader range than many other clubs, but which is important to keep the club alive and something people want to be part of and enjoy being part of. Plus to provide challenging and enjoyable sport and exercise in the outdoors

The British Nights went down very well and even made it into the BOF talk on unmissable events - albeit with a photo call out, and the Ace of Herts the next day was an equally good event.

Inside the marquee at the British Nights

We did have problems with the previous wet weather, needing matting in the field, 2 tractors and parking on the road, which has now pushed the event into a loss. Lessons learned are certainly to budget and plan for matting if parking in a field in the winter, and where possible to have a planned hard standing fall back e.g. road or farm yard.

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The St Albans Urban in October seems a long while ago now, but certainly we had call outs on the day for a very good event.

Saturday Leagues have just about maintained an average of runners of 110, similar to previous years. I have worked hard to have a mix of new or refreshed areas plus old favourites and areas where the event is more straightforward to put on, feeling that with orienteering it is the variety and challenge of the unknown that is important. We aren't parkrun where the familiarity is good , though we do have elements where we can learn from parkrun (as described in the unmissable events webinar) such as the social side.

We have started to have more challenge this year with permissions due to environmental concerns. In previous years we have pretty much lost access to Burnham Beeches this year, much the same with Whippendell and largely Croxley Moor, all SSSI where the landowners are taking the view that their visitors should keep to the paths. We also nearly lost Chipperfield with concerns about nesting birds and going off paths. As a consequence of managing Chipperfield access I started to add environmental risk to the risk assessment. But we also need to recognise that access and events co-ordination will take more time, so it is very good that Dave Kingdon has volunteered and is progressively taking on the role of Access Officer.

We have a full year planned ahead, including Ace of Herts at Ashridge, an Urban in Welwyn Garden City, a good mix of Saturday leagues and in September next year the Senior Home International Relays

Then lastly many thanks to all the excellent planners, organisers, controllers and event volunteers in the club who have made all our events successful, providing great things to do across the weekends of the year

2025-26 Events

Date	Level	Type	Area
6-Sep-25	D	Saturday	Jersey Farm
4-Oct-25	D	Saturday	Panshanger - Postponed (storm)
26-Oct-25	C	Urban	St Albans City - Urban 25
1-Nov-25	D	Saturday	Fairlands
6-Dec-25	D	Saturday	Panshanger
26-Dec-25	D	Score (with LOK)	Trent Park
3-Jan-26	D	Saturday	Sherrards
31-Jan-26	D	Saturday	Nomansland

7-Feb-26	A	Night	British Night Champs 26 / Egypt plus
8-Feb-26	B	Middle	Ace of Herts - Egypt plus
7-Mar-26	D	Saturday	Lees Wood
11-Apr-26	D	Saturday	Moneyhole
2-May-26	D	Saturday	Chipperfield
6-Jun-26	D	Saturday	Highfield
4-Jul-26	D	Saturday	Verulamium / GLOSS
5-Sep-26	D	Saturday	Oaklands
8-Sep-26	D	Club Sprint	Highfield

Club performance at Regional and National level – Tom Cochrane, Club Captain

This part of the club report is where we celebrate our individual and - particularly - our team competitive endeavours.

The highlight of the calendar year as far as team competitions go is still to come: we have qualified for the Compass Sport Cup final on 18th October. Please can I use this report to encourage anyone who has not yet signed up to put in an entry! It's a great opportunity to take part at the sharp end, with only the top clubs from each region taking part.

Thanks to everyone who took part in the heat in February. It was very close and we needed our strong turnout of over 40 runners to get over the line.

As usual there were multiple HH teams at all of the major relay competitions: British championships, JK and British sprint championships. It is always pleasing to see the mix of club stalwarts and those new to relay competitions trying their hand. This year we managed a podium in the British relay championships.

A new addition to the relay events for the year was Jukola in Finland. I can personally confirm this was a great experience, and while it may not happen every year hopefully it can be a semi-regular occurrence.

Individually, one of the highlights of the year was Becky and Darrio's selection for the Interland competition in March. We also had a wide range of podium places this year in the British middle, sprint and night championships, JK sprint and Welsh championships. Well done for those achievements.

Individual results have also translated into some strong performances in club league competitions. In the 2025 UKOL we were 5th overall, a very strong showing that is proving tricky to replicate this year. We also placed 4th in the SE League.

Junior development – Jennie Soulsby, Junior Coordinator

Thank you to everyone who has helped with the Juniors this year. The juniors have had a good year making it to the Final of the Yvette Baker. Timing clashes and distance to the event meant we could not get a team together to compete, so we look forward to next year's event. Currently we have a team for the Peter Palmer, so we are looking forward to that event in early September.

In terms of progression and development we have had some new juniors who have progressed nicely and we had SEJS approach three athletes (Kieran, Anna-Lucia and Cobie) with Kieran showing interest. Theo Marsden has also joined the squad with Niamh Mitchell training with them and will hopefully become a full squad member this year. This will give them additional monthly training and the opportunity to take part in JIRCs this September. This brings the total number of HH juniors in SEJS to nine.
Nationally we have had success again with Niamh Mitchell qualifying to attend the Lagganlia training camp this summer and Issy Hawks going to Stockholm. Issy has continued to be a part of Talent South. We can also celebrate Niamh being selected to represent Wales in the Junior Home International competition.

I hope the juniors are all proud of themselves and their performances.
We decided not to continue with the junior captain's role as it was difficult to define it and present a clear workload / structure.

Alice Soulsby helped me to revamp the Juniors section of the website as part of her Gold DofE. I will endeavour to keep this up to date and keep the news section as a good place to celebrate success. Csognor has also chosen to help out with coaching as part of his DofE.
I am also going to ask the Juniors if there is anything that they would like me to introduce. Kate Hawks has also agreed to add a section to the newsletter that will highlight a specific junior each time. This should be a fun way to build a team spirit.

Safeguarding - Jennie Soulsby, Welfare Officer

I aim to keep on top of new policies as they come out. Specific work this year has been:

- Keeping the safeguarding section of the website current
- Making sure that the new low level concerns policy has been shared (newsletter).
- Making sure the new QR code is in place at events enabling anybody to raise concerns.

Training – Alex Soulsby, Training Officer

Firstly, a big thank you to all of the coaches and helpers who have led and supported training for HH this year. We have had a great year with a big mixture of newcomers, regulars and a few families returning to the sport.

This year we have continued to offer a regular, monthly training session for both juniors and adults with ten sessions over the year plus offering *ad hoc* training at Saturday events plus assisting schools and scout groups. We have used a range of HH forest and parkland areas which allow us to deliver more technical skills in areas like the complex terrain of Mardley Heath and also focus on practicing core skills such as compass work at a location like Moneyhole.

In addition to club technical training each month we ran two newcomer-only sessions in the summer: one for adults and the other for families. HH coaches also joined up with scout groups to run some introductory sessions in local parks and we worked with Skyswood School in St Albans to do an introductory session for their Year 6 pupils. These sort of events are quite easy for us to roll out for other groups so if you are involved with scouts or similar groups and would like to consider this sort of event let me know.

We also ran a planning course and an advanced planning/introduction to controlling course in the summer of 2026. Thanks to Hedley and Simon for running these. If there are any other queries or requests then let me know and I will see if I can help.

Coaches and helpers wanted – we are keen for anyone with some experience who can help support the coaches with newcomers. No qualifications necessary – just enthusiasm.