

BRITISH MIXED SPRINT RELAY CHAMPS 2025

A small but happy band of AIREs represented the club in the last inter club relay event of the year. We were able to field four teams but unfortunately two had to count as non-competitive due to a lack of female runners. Nevertheless I think we punched above our weight with some excellent results.

The venue was RAF Honington near Bury St Edmunds and so all our teams had an aviation theme rather than the ursine names I've been using recently. Before the races started I issued some SMART targets for the teams and they really outperformed. The assembly, start and finish were all outside the perimeter fence of the base and all but one control were in amongst the hangars, other buildings and RAF memorabilia (including tanks, missile launchers and a Tornado jet). Courses were fairly straightforward and totally flat (you don't tend to build an airbase in hilly terrain!) and it made for close relay racing.

First to run were the AIRE Cadets running in Young Junior (12-). Charlie and Alfie Alcock were joined in this team by guest runner Evan Llewellyn of NOC. Charlie got them off to an amazing start, completing leg 1 in first place in under 8 minutes. The other two lads kept up the momentum and the team finished in a great 2nd place overall, hitting my target of top 4.

We had two teams in the Ad-Hoc class. The lead team, AIRE Force One, comprising Alice Leake, Henry Stitson and David Alcock was originally earmarked to run with Emily in the Elite category until Emily's selection for GB the same weekend. The second team AIRE O Dynamic was lead out by David Bowman with Tony Carlyle and Ian Marshall.

On first leg the teams came back 6th and 7th and I wondered if my target of a win for AIRE Force One had been too stretching. However the team took firm control of the race as Henry returned after leg 2 with a clear lead and the fastest leg time, and then David extended the lead to 7 minutes with another fastest leg time to deliver a thumping win! Brilliant running, and it was clear that the other leading teams had heavily front loaded their resources.

My target of a top 12 result for AIRE O Dynamic was also smashed by David, Tony and Ian who came in an excellent 7th place out of 22 teams..

Our final team was AIRE Traffic Control running in the Supervet (55+) class; given the very strong field my target was top 6 for the combination of Chris Gibbins, Joyce Marshall and me. This was the first time Chris had run a relay and he said beforehand that he was feeling the weight of responsibility; it didn't affect his performance as he ran a superb first leg, leading through the spectator control and handing over to Joyce just ahead of the first of numerous SYO teams. Joyce kept up the good work and held on to second place just behind SN with SYO still breathing down our necks but the rest of the field well behind.

It was all set for a real burn up on leg 3 and that's what happened as I charged off with Pete Jones SN and Dave Peel SYO. Initially it was neck and neck stuff but after halfway I sensed that Dave and I had dropped Pete. I didn't fancy my chances in a sprint finish and also I thought there was a risk of being on a longer gaffe towards the end of the course (as was the case in the 2024 BMSR). So I decided I had to go for it and pushed on ahead. That turned out to be a poor decision! After just a couple of controls in the lead I sadly made a mistake; Dave got away for the win and I left the door open for Pete to snatch 2nd place for

SN. So in the end it was a bronze medal for AIRE Traffic Control and a trip onto the rather wobbly straw bale podium. But with a first, a second, a third and a seventh it has to go down as a successful team trip to East Anglia and a good warm up for the individual sprints the next day.



AIREs ready to take flight at RAF Honington. Chocks away!



AIRE Cadets (pic Andy Llewellyn)



AIRE Force One winning (pic Katie Stitson)



AIRE Traffic Control on the somewhat agricultural podium (pic Wendy Carlyle)



Tony slipping past RAF security on leg 2 for AIRE O Dynamic (pic Wendy Carlyle).