

Race Reports

Races reported recently in the local press

Toddy proves a festive tonic (31.12.04)

One of the festive season's best loved athletics events took place in Todmorden on Bank Holiday Monday as around 200 runners converged on the town to compete in the 'Hot Toddy' road race and its attendant fun run.

The main race, organised by Todmorden Harriers, is a hilly 5.8 miles, starting in the centre of town before heading up the valley to Walsden and then climbing up to the Shepherds Rest and Lumbutts before descending back to Halifax road and the finish.

The backdrop for this year's race was provided by the recent cold snap and competitors were treated to fine views of snowy moorland and 'winter wonderland' countryside, although the actual race route was thankfully clear of any serious snow or ice.

First man home was Ian Fisher from Otley AC in a very fast time of 28.20, followed by Walsden's Jon Cordingley, running for Bingley Harriers, finishing in a time of 29.13, a time which may have seen him winning in previous years.

Todmorden Harriers were well represented. Leading home the local club was Chris Smale in 7th place in a time of 30.29, with George Ehrhardt following closely in 9th position and Alex Whitem in 17th, the local club can be pleased with its showing despite narrowly losing out on the men's team prize, which went to Skipton AC.

In the ladies' race, Sue Becconsall of Bingley Harriers came home a comfortable winner in a time of 34.42, an excellent time that saw her placing 24th in the race as a whole. Second lady was Anna Kelly of Clayton Le Moors in a time of 37.13.

The Todmorden ladies also ran well, scooping the team prize after good runs by Ali Richards (76th), new signing Melanie Siddall (86th) and international triathlete Lynn Griffiths (109th).

After the race, the runners retired to the excellent hospitality of the White Hart for the traditional 'Hot Toddy', a potent brew that is mixed each year to a secret recipe known only to a select few and jealously guarded.

At the prize giving, Race Director Peter Ehrhardt thanked the competitors for turning out and declared himself pleased with the day's events. He concluded by reminding runners to put a date in their diaries for next year's race, which is already being planned.

Full Todmorden Harriers' results were: 7, Chris Smale (30.29); 9, George Ehrhardt (31.01); 17, Alex Whitem (32.50); 19, Paul Brannigan (34.13); 37, Mark Anderton (36.39); 47, Duncan Ritchie (37.55); 70, Rhys Watkins (39.49); 76, Alison Richards (40.22); 86, Melanie Siddall (41.12); 100, Jonathan Sutcliffe (42.44); 101, Bohuslav Barlow (42.50); 109, Lynne Griffiths (43.12); 124, Moyra Parfitt (44.23); 125, Jeanette Dowling (44.41); 138, Dave O'Neill (45.58); 139, Julia Holt (45.59); 140, Laura Wright (46.09); 142, Lew Wright (46.49); 159, Trevor Smith (49.22); 172, Myra Wells (54.27); 175, John Newby (55.14); 179, Caite Horsfall (57.14).

Harriers toast New Year at Auld Lang Syne fell race (7.1.05)

On New Year's Eve, 24 Todmorden Harriers interrupted their festivities to travel to Penistone Hill Country Park to compete in the annual six mile 'Auld Lang Syne' fell race.

The race, organised by prolific fell race promoters Dave and Eileen Woodhead, takes a meandering circuit of the moors above Stanbury to provide a course where the mud's often knee deep and frequent slippery peat slopes often lead to unwary or overly reckless racers spending time face down in the slime and crossing the finishing line looking like extras from the 'Black and White Minstrel Show'.

With nearly 500 entrants, the event can boast of being one of the most popular and well attended local fell meetings of the year. Its appeal lies not only in the free bottles of beer given to all finishers, but also in the atmosphere of camaraderie and good humour which prevails throughout the muddy slog.

This is not to say that competition is any less keen at the 'sharp end' than in any other race. This year proved no exception and some of the best fell runners in the country fought out an exciting conclusion. The eventual winner was international mountain runner Andy Jones of Salford Harriers in a time of 39.04. He was followed home in second place by former English Fell Champion and multiple previous winner Ian Holmes of Bingley Harriers, with another international mountain runner, John Brown in third. Just behind these three leading athletes came Todmorden Harriers' own local star George Ehrhardt in a creditable fourth place in such a quality field.

Other notable Harriers' performances came from 11th placed Sean Willis, who fought off the effects of a heavy cold to continue his good run of form, and relative newcomers Mark Goldie (55th) and Jeff Walker (68th) both of whom continue to improve with every race.

Full Todmorden Results were as follows: 4, George Ehrhardt (39.59); 11, Sean Willis (42:18); 55, Mark Goldie (47.25); 68, Jeff Walker (48.23); 78, Dave Collins (48.52); 87, Martin Roberts (49.39); 131, Simon Galloway (51.37); 145, Phil Hodgson (52:20); 195, Alison Richards (54.44); 216, Richard Leonard (55.52); 235, Rhys Watkins (56.47); 245, Jane Smith (57.38); 249, Peter Bowles (57.55); 253, Richard O'Sullivan (58.12); 264, Eric Wrathall (59.04); 271, Colin Duffield (59.23); 276, John Lee (59.32); 293, Rachel Skinner (60.36); 322, Peter Ehrhardt (62.53); 342, John Page (64.03); 359, Mandy Goth (66.57); 421, Jim Smith (86.24); 430, John Newby (87.18).