

Recent Press Reports

Helen Windsor 10K Road Race

Sixteen Todmorden Harriers travelled to the rural outskirts of Halifax recently to compete in the Helen Windsor 10K. The race, which is expertly organised by Halifax Harriers, was chosen as the 5th counter in the Todmorden club's road championship. Those competing were blessed with warm and sunny weather, perhaps a little too warm as the undulating nature of the course took its toll on tired legs towards the end of the route which for the most part toured the villages of Greetland, Stainland, and Norland.

The race was won by Ian Fisher of Otley AC in a time of 32.07, over a minute clear of his nearest rival, Steve Neill of Pudsey and Bramley AC. The ladies' race was dominated by Blackshawhead's Jo Waites, who although normally a Calder Valley Fell Runner competes as unattached when racing on the tarmac. Waites' winning time of 38.23 was enough to beat former Tod Harrier Sue Beconsall into second place.

Ten Kilometres is often viewed as the yardstick by which road runners test their fitness. If this is true, then Todmorden's Paul Brannigan who finished in 19th place undoubtedly seems to be returning to his optimum form after a difficult year on the sidelines. After Brannigan, the next placed Todmorden man was 22nd placed Mark Goldie who is currently managing to combine a growing reputation as a fell runner with consistently solid road form.

Top placed Todmorden woman was Mel Blackhurst who finished in a time of 45.52, forty-five seconds and nine places ahead of team mate Sarah Glyde, who in turned pipped another Tod lady, Mel Siddall by just 16 seconds.

Mandy Goth's Bob Graham Round

Local athlete Mandy Goth was celebrating last weekend after becoming one of an elite group of women who have completed the 'Bob Graham Round'.

The round is a traverse of 42 peaks in the English Lake District and covers a distance of 72 miles with 28,500 feet of climbing, which must be completed within 24 hours. It is commonly viewed as the ultimate challenge for endurance fell running and has seen less than a hundred successful female aspirants.

Mandy, who is Chairman of Todmorden Harriers, set off from the centre of Keswick on the stroke of midnight on the 8th July and arrived back there to complete her 'round' some 23 hours and 48 minutes later, twelve minutes inside the allowed time.

Despite generally good conditions for most of the run, towards the latter stages she was slowed considerably by atrocious weather, particularly whilst descending from Skiddaw, one of England's highest mountains. Here, a sudden vicious storm and strong head winds forced Mandy and her helpers to hand onto each other's clothing for safety as they made their way down on uncertain paths in the darkness. The drama of this descent lost valuable time and necessitated a speedy finish through the outskirts of Keswick, in which tired legs were pushed to their limits through the quiet streets.

After finishing Mandy was keen to thank her helpers, who ran with her in stages to ensure her safety and provide moral support. It speaks for her popularity amongst her fellow athletes that these helpers came from across the fell running world, as old club rivalries were put aside to help towards the common goal.

Mandy is now looking forward to a holiday to recharge her batteries, although not for her a lazy beach holiday in the Mediterranean, she is soon off to the Swiss Alps, running and mountaineering with husband Phil and other members of Todmorden Harriers.

Stoodley Pike

Todmorden Harriers hosted their annual Stoodley Pike Fell Race last Tuesday. The race is one of the longest established in the area, dating from the mid 1970s, and although the route has changed slightly over the years, the principle has remained the same, to climb to the Pike from the 'Top Brink' and then to descend back to the start via the steepest part of the hill.

This year the race had a new director, Rachel Skinner, who recently took over organising the event after some years' sterling work by her fellow Harrier, Mark Anderton. This first event of Rachel's tenure as organiser was marked by a bumper field of 174 runners, including seventeen from neighbouring club Calder Valley. This turnout amounted to the largest field for six years and reinforced the events popularity in the fell running calendar.

In recent years the proceeds of the race have been donated to a local good cause. This year, it is hoped that young athletes from all corners of Calderdale will benefit from this, as a donation will be given to Halifax Harriers athletics track fund.

'It's nice that Tod Harriers can give something back.' said a spokesman for the club 'We are very much a community club and this is one way of showing it.'

The weather for the race stayed fine but cloudy, perfect conditions for fell running as the runners left Mankinholes for the steep climb over Langfield Common. Andy Peace of Bingley Harriers took an early lead chased by Jonathan Hare of Halifax Harriers and Horwich's James Logue. Whilst in the women's race Candice Leah of Clayton Le Moors Harriers established a lead over Bingley Harriers' Sue Becconsall. After rounding the Pike, Peace maintained his position on the descent back into the village to finish in 19.01, eleven seconds in front of the fast finishing Logue. Candice Leah followed in a time of 22.59, comfortably clear of second lady Becconsall.

First Todmorden runner home was Andy Wrench, who also took the honours for the first veteran 40. Todmorden also took the men's team honours with six runners in the first twenty finishers. Women's team honours went to Clayton.

After the race Rachel Skinner thanked the Langfield Commoners, the Landlord and staff of the Top Brink, and also the volunteers from Todmorden Harriers who marshalled the course and helped in the administration of the race.

Kath Brierley's Bob Graham Round

Todmorden Harriers were celebrating again last weekend, as Kath Brierley became the second Lady member to complete the challenge of the famous 'Bob Graham Round'. The round, which is 72 miles in length with 28,55 feet of climbing visits 42 of the most prominent peaks in the Lake District must be completed within 24 hours and is seen as the pinnacle of endurance fell running.

Starting from the Moot hall in the centre of Keswick, Kath became the newest member of the 'BG club' when she finished the challenge in 23 hours and 29 minutes, a fast time in the often sweltering conditions on the fells.

With daytime temperatures exceeding 30 degrees, the heat took its toll and at one point in the challenge she found herself some 45 minutes behind schedule. However as the sun went down she dug deep into her reserves and visited the three last peaks of Blencathra, Great Calva, and Skiddaw in double quick time and more than made up for time lost earlier in the day.

Her achievement echoes that of her friend and clubmate Mandy Goth, who completed her Bob Graham Round just two weeks before.

Kath, who is a teacher at Todmorden High School, praised the help and support she received from fellow members of Todmorden Harriers, and also the Rucksack Club. Later she summed up her day as 'A stunning day with fantastic support and incredible views'

With the challenge now completed Kath can enjoy a well earned rest from the arduous training schedule she has been following for the past 12 months. As one member of Todmorden Harriers said after accompanying her on part of the route, 'If you can't put your feet up after completing a Bob Graham Round, I don't know when you can!'

Book Review: CalderCask Real Ale Guide

This recently published pocket sized book is a must for all runners - with more relevant listings than the FRA Handbook.

Stretching from Shelf and Brighouse to Rishworth and Cornholme this guide comprehensively lists every pub in the area, open and selling real ale this spring. It covers Good Beer Guide regulars, favourite Harriers haunts and many that, viewed from the outside I wouldn't have dreamed of setting foot in, but which do have a hand pump of Tetleys (surprisingly still very common) or Theakstons.

While it passes no comment on the quality of the beer it deserves a place in everyone's kit bag – just in case you passing through less travelled areas and are in need of some emergency re-hydration.

There is a surprising amount of information in each pub's entry including history, layout, and special features. There is a big emphasis on the community aspect of pubs – which local groups meet there or use as a base. So many Toddy venues give us a mention both for pack runs or fell races. Hence the entry for the Hollins – last in the book – "The local angling society gathers here, as do the Tod Harriers, although the latter seem to meet in many other pubs as well."

A great endorsement of the club, the locations we frequent and the quality research of this guide. A bargain £3 (£2.50 CAMRA Members) available from many drinking outlets.

- Dave O'Neill