

Recent Press Reports

Radcliffe Trail Race

Todmorden Harriers brushed off their trail shoes for the latest race in the club championships.

The Radcliffe 5 mile Trail Race is a fast 'out and back' style route that tours Tingley Woods on the outskirts of Manchester. Although the route uses a nature trail to provide the backbone of the route, the racing Harriers had little time to study the flora and fauna as the race was run at a furious gallop. However, the organisers, Radcliffe AC had planned the route well and had incorporated several testing small hills to catch out the unwary or those running more quickly than they could maintain for the full course.

The race was won by Ken Chapman, lately of Salford Harriers but now competing as an unattached runner. First of the Harriers home was the improving James Riley who crossed the line in 32.53 in 29th place, some 34 seconds ahead of his clubmate Keith Parkinson. Elsewhere in the race, Alice Heath brought the Todmorden ladies home club home with a creditable fifth position in the ladies' placings. Melanie Nichols and Sharon Godsman followed her home in seventh and eighth place to complete a strong showing by the Todmorden women.

Worsthorne Moor Race

Another running fixture to attract a number of Harriers recently was the Worsthorne Moor Race. This event attracted a quality field, including race winner Sheffield's Lewis Banton running in the colours of Clowne AC. His winning time of 40.48 gave him a comfortable victory, whilst Calder Valley's Sally Newman was good enough to leave the ladies field struggling in her wake to take ladies honours.

Shaun Godsman, in sixth place, was first Todmorden Harrier home, finishing some two and a half minutes behind the Banton. Other Harriers elite runners who registered in the higher placings were new signing Paul Burnett in 14th place and Mark Goldie in 17th.

Brown Wardle Hill Race

Todmorden Harriers busy racing season continued last week with the Paula Locketti Brown Wardle Hill Race in Whitworth. The race, organised by prolific race organiser and charity fundraiser Andy O Sullivan MBE, is best described as falling in between the two disciplines of fell racing and road racing, the start being on steep tarmac, before climbing through rougher ground to the summit of Brown Wardle Hill before a breakneck plunge back down the hill to the finishing line.

The Harriers were well represented with Andrew Wrench in third place after a nip and tuck battle with eventual winner Nick Leigh of Pudsey and second place Malcolm Fowler of Wilmslow. Other Harriers were in close attendance at the top end of the field were Alex Whittem coming home in 6th place, Mark Goldie in 9th and Simon Anderton crossing the line in twelfth.

Sedbergh Hills

The Todmorden runners barely had time to recover from the Brown Wardle Race before heading north in search of English Fell Running Championship points at the Sedbergh Hills Fell Race. This race takes place in the Howgills, a remote area that straddles both the Lake District and the Yorkshire Dales and has been described as a 'fell runner's paradise'. However despite the idyllic setting, the route is notoriously tough and is designed to test the legs of even the most experienced fellsman with a crippling climbs up to the little known summits of Arrant Haw and Winder.

On the day, local knowledge and an intimate familiarity with the route paid dividends with patches of low lying cloud seriously reducing visibility and causing some frustration as many competitors strayed off route and lost valuable time in the mist.

One person who had no such trouble was Bingley Harrier and South Lakes local, Rob Jebb who dominated the race to cross the line first in a time of 1.59.41, two minutes clear of fellow mountain running international Lloyd Taggart of Dark Peak Fell Runners in second place. In the ladies race Natalie White took the honours in a time of 2.25.21, making it a clean sweep for Bingley and also breaking the previous best ladies time by two minutes.

In a race some of the Harriers elite were unlucky to fall foul of the navigational challenges the race posed, but Jon Wright and Chris Smale kept their bearings to lead the Harriers home, finishing in 36th and 37th places respectively. Tod Ladies' sole representative was Mandy Goth, who crossed the line in a time of 3.47.42.

Calder Valley Fell Runners also sent a strong contingent to the race, the best placed of these being Karl Grey who crossed the line in 31st place in the men's race and Jo Buckley who finished in 11th place in the ladies' race.

Ultra Tour Du Mont Blanc

In the athletics world, ultra running is usually defined as distances exceeding marathons, run on trails or footpaths. One of the Blue Riband events in the 'Ultra' Calendar is the 96 mile 'Tour Du Mont Blanc', which this year saw its' first participation by Todmorden Harriers.

The event, which starts in Chamonix, is a circuit around the highest mountain massif in Western Europe, and crosses national borders to pass through Italian and Swiss soil before returning to the finish in France. The race consistently attracts some 2500 entrants, although it's likely that in any given year, almost half of all starters will retire before completing the full course.

Tod Harriers were represented by experienced ultra runners, Phil Hodgson, Rhys Watkins, Richard Leonard, and Dave Makin. Despite their experience, the 96 mile circuit still caused some trepidation in the weeks leading up to the event. 'I'd done the Comrades Ultra in South Africa which is 56 miles,' said Rhys Watkins, 'but I had no idea how nearly 100 miles at altitude would feel, I just couldn't imagine it.'

In the event Rhys finished in 40 hours after running though the night through numerous Alpine villages and over snowy passes.

Three and a half hours in front of Rhys were first Harriers to finish, Dave Makin, who competes as a 'second claim' Todmorden runner, and Hebden Bridge based Phil Hodgson. Completing the Todmorden quartet was Richard Leonard who crossed the line a little later in 468th position in his category.

The successful Harriers had been training for the event for much of the last year, mainly by completing the toughest UK fell races and ultra events. In addition to this Phil and Richard have recently returned from a holiday in the Alps where they took the opportunity to hone their fitness on similar ground to the race, pounding mile after mile on mountain trails.

Reflecting on their achievement in the Tour Du Mont Blanc, Phil commented, 'It's got to be the best organised event I've ever experienced. Afterwards my legs were completely trashed and my feet badly blistered but yes, it was definitely worth the pain.'

Blackshawhead Fete Race

The inaugural Blackshawhead Fete Fell Race took place last Saturday. Unfortunately extremely poor weather caused the cancellation of the fete but the fell race went ahead with a field of fifty one runners braving the harsh elements.

As a consequence of the weather, winning times were never going to be fast, as gusting winds and horizontal rain slowed the runners' progress around the route which took them over Heptonstall Moor and back to Blackshawhead via the packhorse bridge at Hebble Hole.

The mens' race was won by Todmorden resident James Logue, who runs in the colours of Horwich RMI. He was followed home by the fast improving Ben Mounsey of Stainland Lions and Todmorden Harrier Andrew Wrench. In the ladies' race, Calder Valley Fell Runner and Blackshawhead resident Jo Waites romped to an emphatic victory, finishing over a minute ahead of second placed Lisa Lacon of Holmfirth Harriers.

In the spirit of the village fete, prizes were also awarded to the first locals to cross the line. Whilst Jo Waites' overall victory assured her of the ladies' local prize, Todmorden Harrier Roger Haworth took the local men's honours after coming out on top after a tussle with neighbour Greg Elwell.

After the race, organisers Sarah and Andy Glyde thanked all those who helped with the planning and administration of the event, including the Fete committee, the local landowners and the course marshals.

Press Reports

I try to keep relatively up to date with what's going on but I do sometimes miss things. So, If I've missed your moment of glory and you'd like to see it reported in the hallowed pages of the local press, please get in touch with me on 01422 846593 or email claire.colin@virgin.net.

Also photos are always welcome, either of specific races or library photos that may come in handy for future reports.

Cheers,

Colin.