

Recent Press Reports by Colin Duffield & Phil Hodgson

Ilkley Moor/High Cup Nick/ Huddersfield 10k

Press Date 26/02/08

Experience Made To Count On Ilkley Moor

Once again it was the veterans to the fore for Todmorden Harriers last weekend as Tod runners took home prizes at the prestigious Ilkley Moor fell race. The five mile race, which squeezes a hefty 1260 feet of climbing into it's modest length, starts in the outskirts of Ilkley before heading up for a breezy tour of the famous moor.

The race was won by Ilkley local Graham Pearce, running in the colours of Pudsey and Bramley and crossing the line in a time of 39.13. Hard on the winner's heels in the chasing pack were Todmorden stars Chris Smale and Sean Willis who finished 5th and 6th overall in the high quality 260 strong field, with Smale registering a time of 40.49 and edging out his club mate by just half a minute to take the prize for first over 40.

Other notable Harriers results at Ilkley were Dave Collins who was third veteran 50 in a time of 48.02, and Jane Smith who narrowly missed out on first veteran 50 lady, finishing in 56.34.

Another Harrier making his mark on the fells last weekend was Martin Roberts who made the lonely solo journey to Dufton for the High Cup Nick Fell Race. A tough, high level, eight miler around one of the wilder areas of the North Pennines. Roberts was rewarded for his attendance with a prize for second veteran 50, completing the course in 1.16.24, giving him 27th place overall in the 150 finishers.

Whilst these athletes were on the moors, a contingent of Harriers hit the road for the Huddersfield 10k Race. First Tod man home was promising newcomer Richard Butterwick in 77th position in the four hundred strong field, with fellow Harriers Lee McCluskey and Andrew Bibby finishing just behind.

Noon Stone

Press Date 06/03/08

High Time At Noon Stone For Fell Runners

Recent rain and high winds did nothing to deter a near record field of 213 runners at Saturday's Noon Stone Fell Race on Langfield Moor.

The race, a tough nine-miler organised by Todmorden Harriers, is regarded as a Pennine Classic and in recent years has twice been chosen as a national championship race by the Fell Runners Association. Although the national championships will take place elsewhere this year, the Noon Stone was never the less chosen as a counter in several clubs' own championships, including Todmorden's neighbouring club Calder Valley Fell Runners, as well as Bingley Harriers, Rochdale Harriers, and Rossendale Harriers. With such a number of clubs turning out in force, a high quality field was inevitable, and there was even some pre race talk of Andrew Wrench's fourteen year old record being under threat.

After a delayed start due to the bumper turn out, the runners left Lumbutts at the just after midday and as they reached the top of the first arduous climb at the summit of Coldwell Hill, all the fancied names were at the sharp end, with Salford's international mountain runner, John Brown, leading the way from locals Karl Gray and Shaun Godsman of CVFR, with Todmorden based James Logue who runs in the red of Horwich RMI also in close contact.

First lady to the top of Coldwell was last year's winner Janet Mclver of Dark Peak Fell Runners, with Anna Lupton of Radcliffe chasing in second and running hard as the field turned and headed towards Stoodley.

These early front runners stayed in charge as the race wound its way around Langfield Common, visiting Stoodley Pike before dropping towards Cragg Vale before the tricky navigational section across the pathless moor where vital seconds were gained and lost before heading for home.

As the runners started to make their way towards the last descent it was Brown who seemed to be in control, but a break-neck charge down the steep, last hill by Shaun Godsman saw the Calder Valley man pull Brown back and briefly get in front before the Salfordian put in a finishing kick with only a hundred metres to go and secured victory in a time of 1.10.35, his final winning margin just four seconds. A short time later Karl Gray followed these two across the line, with first Todmorden runner being Andrew Wrench who finished in 9th place, but his race record remains unbeaten.

The ladies race was won by Janet Mclver in a time of 1.21.48, a fast time, giving her the luxury of tackling the last section of the course with daylight between her and second placed lady Anna Lupton.

Both team prizes went to 'the raiders from down the valley' Calder Valley Fell Runners, with Godsman, Gray and Jason Stevens making up the men's team, and Gayle Sugden, Sharon Godsman, and Claire Hanson counting for the ladies.

All the day's winners received a special bottle of 'Todmorden Harriers 30th Anniversary Ale', specially brewed for the club by Bare Arts Brewery.

After the race a Todmorden Harriers spokesman thanked the land owners for their help putting the race on, the landlord and staff of the Top Brink for their excellent hospitality throughout the day, and finally all the runners for turning out in difficult conditions and making the race a success.

Black Combe

Press date 13/03/08

Harriers Start their Bid For National Glory

The fell running English Championship 2008 got off to a whirlwind start at the Black Combe Fell Race on Saturday 4th March. The calm conditions at the start, in the village of Silecroft on the southern edge of the Lake District, belied the vicious conditions the runners would face as they traversed the high summits on the race route. As to be expected with the first counter in

the six race series that makes up the English Championship, it was a large field with 318 runners lining up at the start. Most of the top names in English fell running, both male and female, were there with the aim of getting the season off to a good start. Calderdale clubs, continuing their inexorable rise up the rankings, contributed nearly 15 per cent of the field with 23 Todmorden Harriers and 19 Calder Valley Fell Runners making the trip north.

The eight mile race, which includes 3,400 feet of ascent, is usually a tough, but straightforward romp up trails to the summit of Black Combe, down grassy paths over White Combe, up a character building ridge, over the summit of Black Combe for a second time before finishing with a headlong dash back down to Silecroft. However, this year's race day introduced another dimension as low cloud shrouded the high ground and storm force winds and hail lashed the ridges. Navigational chaos ensued as some of the fell running elite, focused more on speed than direction, managed to miss the checkpoint on the first summit. The middle order, having successfully stuck to the correct route, found themselves unexpectedly in front of these faster runners before natural order was restored as the elite boys sprinted past them on the second climb up Black Combe. It was at this point on the route that most of the runners endured a stinging hailstorm before plunging downhill to more hospitable terrain and the finish.

Rob Jebb and Rob Hope, 4th and 2nd respectively in the 2007 English Championships, dominated the race from the start, pulling away from Ian Holmes and John Heneghan on the climb up to Black Combe. Rob Jebb made his move on the last big climb pulling nearly a minute ahead and, combined with his fast descent to the finish came in to win nearly three minutes in front of Rob Hope in a time of 1.07.54. Simon Booth came in two minutes after Rob Hope in third place. Fell running legend, Ian Holmes, managed the first veteran 40 placing and 12th overall despite a navigational error on White Combe.

The day saw more great individual and team performances by Todmorden Harriers with Andrew Wrench finishing 16th overall and 2nd veteran 40 and Chris Smale in 19th overall and 3rd veteran 40 which made a major contribution to achieving 3rd place in the vet 40 team placings. Tod's vet 50s also put in a stirring performance to take 3rd vet 50 team placing with Dave Collins in 101st position with only 28 places separating him from Tod's other two counters, Steve Brandwood and Martin Roberts. The ladies team showed great strength in depth with Ali Richards, Kath Brierley and Chris Preston gaining 7th place in the ladies team category and Jane Leonard, celebrating her marriage the day before in fine style, gained the 4th lady vet 50 place.

Calder Valley ladies, 3rd in the English Championships in 2007, showed their class with Helen Fines taking the 2nd lady placing and Sally Newman taking 1st lady vet 40 and vet 45. With Jo Waites as third counter they came 2nd in the ladies team category.

Lytham 10 Mile/Windmill Whizz/ Haworth Hobble

Press Date 20/04/08

Chris Has The Fizz To Win The Whizz

The latest round in the Todmorden Harriers Road Championships took the runners on a trip to the seaside last Sunday for the Lytham Ultrafit 10 Mile Race. The race is a fast gallop on the wide, flat roads of St Annes and starts in North Beach Car Park and goes to the famous Lytham Windmill and back.

The weather was cool with a chilly breeze coming off the sea, making the day more suitable for running than ice creams on the promenade. Ten Harriers were present amongst the starting pack of 350 runners, many of the Todmorden runners being new, and highly promising signers for the club.

Foremost amongst the Tod runners was superveteran Mick Craven who put in an excellent performance to finish 111th in a time of 1:11:05, he was followed just twelve seconds later by fellow Harrier Richard O'Sullivan. Next Todmorden man home was another new face on the scene, Richard Butterwick, who crossed the line in 127th place.

Amongst the women, Lucy Hobbs has first Harrier home in a creditable 1:16:44, giving her 144th spot overall.

Closer to home at Ogden Reservoir, the six mile Windmill Whizz Trail race attracted three Harriers, but what the local club lacked in numbers was more than made up for in quality as the competing trio took home a hat full of prizes.

Star of the day was Chris Smale who took the rest of the field apart and recorded his second win in the race following his success in 2006. By the final run in, Smale was so in command that he was over a minute clear of second placed Neil Armitage of Pudsey and Bramley, and coasted over the line in a time of 39:20. There was also success for Dave Collins who finished in 45:30 and seventeenth place overall, in the process taking another veteran 50 prize in a season that's looking like it could be a vintage year for him. Joining the men in the prizes was Lynne Griffiths who was third lady in 56:14 and also scooped the ladies' veteran placidit.

In another event last weekend, the emphasis was definitely on endurance, as Keighley and Craven AC hosted their annual long distance event, The Haworth Hobble. The race was slightly longer than in recent years, weighing in at a hefty 33 miles, ran in a wide traverse of Bronte country, visiting Todmorden and Hebden Bridge before returning to Haworth. The race has both a pairs and solo classes, this year Tod's emphasis seemed to be in 'pairing up' for the journey.

Whilst the number of Todmorden Athletes recorded as finishing was somewhat artificially low due to Harriers representing other clubs, the first runners home in Todmorden colours were female pairing Claire Duffield and Kath Brierley who finished in just under six and a half hours, giving them 149th place overall. Next Todmorden pairing was John Preston and Stuart Boulton, who followed them home some twenty minutes and thirty places later. Also competing for the Harriers were Rachael Lockley and Elise Milnes who stopped the clock in eight and a half hours.

Guiseley Gallop/ Causey Pike

Press Date 27/04/08

Snow Adds To Test At Easter

A wintery Easter holiday period did nothing to cool the frenetic pace of the 2008 Todmorden Harriers Club Championships. The latest counter in the series, the Guiseley Gallop Trail Race, took place immediately after the worst of the snow storms on Easter Sunday and as a consequence was run on an alternative bad weather route which avoided the dangerous sections

of canal towpath that could have seen runners taking an unexpected plunge on any lingering patches of snow and ice. This also shortened the race a little from its advertised 10k.

With a recent surge in popularity of trail running, the starting field numbered over four hundred and competition was fierce, before Ian Fisher of Otley AC stamped his authority on the race, winning in a time of 32.01. After Fisher, a large number of runners crossed the line in quick succession, the 16 Todmorden runners who completed the course giving a good account of themselves. First Harrier home was Paul Brannigan who stopped the clock in 39.01, giving him 18th position, and confirming his ongoing rehabilitation after a couple of years troubled by persistent illness and injury. Second Tod man was promising newcomer, Nick Barber, who finished just 40 seconds and eleven places behind Brannigan after a nip and tuck battle throughout the race.

In the ladies' race, although none of the Tod women could challenge race winner Cath Farrow of Leeds club, Valley Striders who completed in 39.57, some impressive runs gained places on the podium. Mel Blackhurst second lady veteran 40 with a time of 43.56, Claire Duffield first lady veteran 35 in 44.29, and Moyra Parfitt taking the ladies' veteran 60 prize with a finishing time of 52.04 .

A little further north, Todmorden Harriers' Ali Richards was ploughing a lonely furrow in the Causey Pike Fell Race in the North Lakes. The race is a classic short sharp Lakeland sprint, being 4.5 miles, but with a brutal 1780 feet of climbing thrown in the mix.

The ladies entry for the race read like a who's who of female fell running, with Bingley's Natalie White coming out top from various current and previous national champions including present champion, Janet McIver.

Richards ran superbly to finish in 6th position in the ladies rankings with a time of 47.34, seven minutes behind White.

Manx Mountain Marathon/ Rivington Pike

Press Date 03/04/08

The Wright Man For Manx Marathon

Over the Easter weekend a trio of Todmorden runners braved a crossing of the blustery Irish Sea to compete in the Manx Mountain Marathon. The event is a serious undertaking over 33 miles, and traversing the mountainous spine of the island, much of the way unmarked and without paths.

Jon Wright found the course to his liking and had a superb run to finish in 6th place overall in a time of 4 hours and 59 minutes, just 15 minutes behind winner Paul Thompson of Clayton Le Moors. Another of Tod's runners with a liking for this kind of tough mountain event, Andrew Horsfall was 25th in a shade over 6 hours, whilst James Riley made up the team in 40th position with a time of 6 hours and 33 minutes.

These results ranked the Harriers in a 3rd position, behind only a very strong teams from Clayton and the local Manx Fell Runners.

In a example of the diversity of the fell running world, whilst these three were on the Isle of Man, another of the elite Harriers was making waves in a very different type of event. Chris Smale had a superb run at the four mile Rivington Pike Fell Race, near Bolton. His time of 19minutes and 10 seconds saw him place 9th amongst a 300 strong field drawn from the very top drawer of the fell running world.

Oldham Half Marathon/Liver Hill/ Baildon/Coniston 14/Bunny Run One

Press date 10/04/08

Todmorden Harriers have been scattered across an eclectic selection of races recently, with some good individual performances recorded.

In the frenetic dash that is the Bunny Run One , Paul Brannigan continued his journey back to form by finishing 35th in the 250 strong field in a time of 20:08, four minutes behind race winner Andi Jones of Salford. Another Harrier competing in the Bunny Run was Oxenhope's Martin Roberts who escorted his daughter, junior runner Annie around the course to finish in 27:20. However, a few days later Roberts was running in his own right and put in a fine performance at the 13-mile Baildon Boundary Way Trail race, finishing 33rd in a quality field in a time of 1:35:43.

There were also a brace of good runs at the 5-mile Liver Hill Fell Race in Rossendale. Chris Smale completing in 35:40, which gave him 4th place and first veteran, in a race won in 34:24 by Darren Kay of Horwich RMI. Todmorden youngster Sean Carey also had a promising run, coming in 15th place the 156 strong field, just three minutes behind the winner.

Away from the fells, the club's Road Championship continued at a pace, with last Sunday's Oldham Half Marathon. Richard O'Sullivan, one of this year's championship pace setters was first Harrier home in 1:42:46 with club mate Melanie Siddal following in 1:51:56. Veteran 60 Peter Ehrhardt was next across the line in 1:54:33, giving him 90th position in the 138 strong field. Steve Burnip completed the Harriers contingent, stopping the clock in 1:56:23.

Elsewhere, there was more success on the roads, courtesy of Chris Preston who travelled to Cumbria to compete in the highly regarded Coniston 14 Road Race, finishing 7th lady in a time of 1:40:12.