

## Press Reports

### Hades Hill

As the autumn approaches and the nights begin to get darker, the nature of the races change in the fell running calendar. Last Thursday Todmorden Harriers travelled the short distance to Whitworth to compete in the last evening fell race of the year, the Hades Hill. The bright crisp weather, the local venue and short course prompted a bumper turnout of 21 Tod runners in the field of 150 starters. The big field made for fierce competition for the higher placings, but Todmorden held their own with Andy Wrench, Chris Smale, Alex Whitem, and Shaun Godsman all finishing inside the top ten, although none of these could catch race winner Danny Hope of Pudsey and Bramley AC.

Elsewhere in the race Todmorden's hot prospect, 16 year old Ashley Wright, continued his rapid improvement, beating off challenges from more experienced competitors to finish in 36<sup>th</sup> position.

In the ladies race, Alice Heath confirmed her promise for the future by finishing 78<sup>th</sup> overall, taking some notable scalps in the process.

### Yorkshireman Marathon/Half Marathon

A different type of challenge was posed by the Yorkshireman Off Road Marathon and Half Marathon on Saturday. The events, which are run simultaneously over the moorland tracks and bridleways around Keighley, are fast becoming regarded as premier events and attract a large number of entries, this year 261 completed the half course and 166 runners completed the full. Foremost in the Todmorden Harriers that completed the full course were Jeff Walker and Rachel Skinner who finished a highly creditable 2nd place in the mixed team section and Colin Duffield who finished 45th in the individual rankings.

The Half Marathon event was won by Stainland's Ben Mounsey who continued his recent fine form by finishing in a time a 1.29.42. In the ladies' race, England International Jo Waites of Calder Valley Fell Runners took the honours. For the Todmorden club, Melanie Blackhurst crossed the line in a time of 1.55.25, which gave her a position of 6th lady. Following Blackhurst home was her fellow Harrier and Oxenhope local Sue Roberts who finished in a time of 2.20.29.

### Mountain Trial

Another event to attract the attention of the Harriers was the 54<sup>th</sup> Lake District Mountain Trail. The event, which is a test of mountain navigation and stamina is run from different venues in the Lakes each year. This year Seathwaite was the venue and competitors were treated to superb, sunny conditions for both the Short (10 mile), Women's (14 mile) and long (20 mile) courses. The event was won by Borrowdale Fell Runner Jonny Bland. Highest ranked Harriers were Phil Hodgson (57th placed in the long course) and Trevor Smith (40th in the short course) and Mandy Goth who finished 13th lady in the ladies' competition. Other Calderdale returns included Jonathan Emberton and Alistair Morris of Calder Valley Fell Runners who finished 29<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> respectively in the long course competition.

### Thieveley Pike

The cream of English fell running gathered in Cliviger last weekend for the final fixture in this year's national championships, the Thieveley Pike Race.

The race is a short and sharp excursion over 4.2 miles with 1300 feet of ascent, starting in Holme Chapel before climbing sharply to the site of an ancient beacon on the summit of Thieveley before a long descent down Stone House Edge back to the starting point.

Amongst the 250 competitors who tackled the course were 23 Todmorden Harriers, all anxious to make their mark in their own back yard. Indeed, in a season dogged by bad luck and injury to their elite athletes, the Harriers saw this as a chance to once again show that the club is now a force to be reckoned with on the national stage.

Because of the large field the men's and ladies' races were ran separately, with the women setting off an hour before the men.

In the ladies' event, the national champion-in-waiting, Natalie White of Bingley Harriers, showed her class by dominating the race and finishing a minute and a half clear of the field in a time of 35.41. Local interest was provided by Jo Waites who lead a strong Calder Valley Ladies team to the collective female honours. There was also a good performance by the Todmorden trio of Alice Heath, Sharon Godsman, and Jane Smith who brought the Harriers' team home in 4<sup>th</sup> place.

In the men's race Todmorden played their strongest cards with English Championship medals still possible in both collective and individual categories.

In the early stages of the race a strong contingent of Harriers kept contact with the front runners as the competitors climbed over the rough ground across Deerplay Moor. After reaching the summit, the field spread out on the long descent to the finish line. Rob Hope underlined his credentials as one of the best fell runners in the country by crossing the line first, his time 30.44. Tod men to the fore were top veteran runners Chris Smale and Andrew Wrench who finished in 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> places respectively. Collectively the male Harriers matched their female teammates in finishing as 4<sup>th</sup> team, with Alex Whitem, Jon Wright, and Mark Goldie joining Smale and Wrench as counters.

The competitors now must wait until the final calculations have been made before finding out their season's standings.

### **Ian Hodgson Relay**

Todmorden's runners had little chance to rest after the Thieveley Pike race as the very next day saw a contingent travelling to Cumbria to take part in the Ian Hodgson Mountain Relays. The event which is run from Brothers Water is an annual test of fell running over rough terrain and mountain craft. It is run in relay by teams of four pairs.

Todmorden fielded two teams, an 'A' team comprising of some of the club's fastest men, and a mixed male and female team.

Although both teams were depleted of potential members due to the rigours of the previous day, the Harriers performed well, the 'A' team coming in 10<sup>th</sup> place whilst the mixed team finished a creditable 51st.

The event was won for the 11<sup>th</sup> successive year by Borrowdale Fell Runners, with fellow Lake District club, Ambleside coming second.

### **Triathlon World Championships-Lausanne**

Todmorden Triathlete Lynne Griffiths recently returned to the country after once again representing England at the Triathlon World Championships. It is the third consecutive year that Todmorden Harrier Lynne has had the honour of competing for her country in the age category section of the prestigious event, this year held in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Despite her previous international experience, she admits to suffering from some pre race nerves before the starting gun was fired, but once into the first discipline, the swim in Lake Lausanne, she was able to relax and concentrate on the race.

After a strong swim she exited the water in 17<sup>th</sup> place before embarking on the second discipline, a 40 kilometre bicycle route. The twisting nature of the bike course wasn't to Lynne's liking and she found herself in the frustrating position of losing places as the course repeatedly climbed and descended through the hilly outskirts of the city. On starting final discipline, the 10 kilometre run, she was determined to regain the places lost on the bike and ran powerfully, gaining places all the way to the tape and finishing in 32<sup>nd</sup> position in her age category.

Now back on home soil, Lynne has had time to reflect on the event, "It was a great experience, our team was very supportive and the whole event had a good buzz about it." She said.

Never a person prone to resting, Lynne is already planning her training in order to be selected for next year's World Championships, to be held in Hamburg.

### **Great Langdale Half Marathon**

Todmorden Harrier Alex Whittem continued his recent fantastic form by finishing in third place in the Great Langdale Half Marathon last Sunday. This is the second podium finish in three weeks for the 25 year old postman following his recent emphatic win in the Mileta 10k in Cleckheaton.

This most recent success saw Whittem travelling to a rainy Cumbria to tackle a course that the organisers boast is the toughest and most scenic road half marathon in the country. Few of the runners who tackled the course last week would disagree, as they wound their way along the narrow mountain roads that surround the picturesque and atmospheric Langdale Valley.

The race has been steadily growing in popularity in the past few years, and this year attracted a high quality field including winner, Brendan Bolland of Horwich RMI who completed the course in 1:19:00. Second was Bolland's team mate and previous winner of this race, Paul Muller in a time of 1:20:05, with Whittem next, crossing the tape in a time of 1:22:19.

In addition to individual success, Todmorden had reason to celebrate after winning the ladies team prize after strong runs from a trio of female runners, Mel Blackhurst who finished 8<sup>th</sup> lady, Alison Richards (10<sup>th</sup> lady) and Alice Heath (12<sup>th</sup> lady).

Another notable Todmorden performance came from Paul Brannigan who crossed the line in 29<sup>th</sup> position in a time of 1:35:42.

The next road fixture in the Harriers Club Championship will be on familiar ground as the club travel to Burnley for the annual 'Fire Station 7' race on October 8<sup>th</sup>.

## **Burnley Fire Station Seven**

As their Club Grand Prix moves towards its conclusion, Todmorden Harriers found themselves racing in the outskirts of Burnley this week. The Burnley Fire Station 7 Road Race is a long term Harriers' favourite and has regularly featured in the clubs yearly programme of races.

The race starts by Queens Park before going into Burnley and past Turf Moor. The runners then head towards Cliviger before turning into Red Lees Road and returning via Mereclough. It is a route which demands respect as much of the climbing is in the second half of the race, meaning that anyone setting off too fast can be found out in the last few miles.

This year the weather stayed fine and blustery for the 17 Harriers who made the journey. The race was won by Aaron Hargreaves of Blackburn Harriers in a very fast time of 36.15. First Todmorden runner to finish was an in-form Alex Whitem who completed the course in 39.54, giving him a pleasing fifth place in a high quality field. First Todmorden lady was Mel Blackhurst who finished in 51.05.

The healthy turnout of Harriers prompted several interesting tussles elsewhere in the race, Todmorden ladies Sarah Glyde and Sharon Godsmann matched each other stride for stride along the route and were only split after a thrilling race to the line, Glyde shading the sprint by just one second. Slightly further down the field, the battle between Harriers Mel Nicholls and club mate Stuart Boulton was decided by just four seconds.

The runners pipped on the line by team mates will have their chance of revenge at the next race in the Harriers Grand Prix, which is the Accrington 10k on the 29<sup>th</sup> October.

## **National Fell Relays**

After the recent completion of the English and British Championships, the fell running scene now moves towards its winter programme and the relay events which traditionally take place at this time of year.

The first of these is the National Fell Relay Championships, an event that attracts teams from all over the country, as far a field as Scotland and Essex. This year Calder Valley Fell Runners had the honour of hosting the event, in and around Castle Carr, at the head of the Luddenden Valley.

The competition is based on each team running four legs, two individual legs and two in pairs. Todmorden Harriers entered their maximum permitted three teams. One in each main category, that being, an elite 'A' Team, a Veterans' Team and a Ladies' Team.

With notable Lakeland clubs choosing not to attend the event, Todmorden knew that their A Team would be in contention for one of the higher placings.

As the event started, Chris Smale was first away for Tod's 'fast boys' on the pressurised first leg, a tough circuit that took him to High Brown Knoll and highest point of Wadsworth Moors. Smale ran soundly against stiff opposition and handed over the baton in ninth place. The second leg was run in pairs and Todmorden fielded Alex Whitem and Shaun Godsmann, who blasted around the nine and a half mile route and gained three places for their club before handing over to team captain Jon Wright and his partner Mark Goldie for the potential banana skin of the navigational leg. This leg is run without prior knowledge, competitors being told details of checkpoints that must be visited only shortly before setting off. Although this caused some confusion amongst other teams, Todmorden's master navigators deftly negotiated the route and handed over in third position. The final leg was run by individuals over nine and a half miles, effectively reversing the second leg. Most teams fielded their star runners at this point, so the heat was firmly on Harriers' anchorman, Andrew Wrench. Wrench handled the pressure well and despite losing a couple of places to former National Champion Simon Bailey of Mercia and England International, Lloyd Taggett of Dark Peak, Todmorden still finished in fifth position. An outstanding result, which saw them ahead of many of the fancied clubs and losing out only to the much bigger clubs such as winners Bingley Harriers.

Elsewhere Todmorden also fielded a strong team in the ultra competitive Veteran's category, finishing 17th. Team captain Derek Donohue praised his team's gritty display, which included fine runs from both individuals and pairings.

Todmorden ladies also rose to the challenge in the ladies' competition. Captain Mel Blackhurst fielded an improving side, which blended experience with newer runners. On the day the team pulled together and again showed their continuing rise up the rankings to finish 10<sup>th</sup>. There was reason for the host club, Calder Valley to celebrate in this category as several outstanding runs saw them take the honours, beating keen rivals Bingley Harriers into second place.

After the event Todmorden's runners praised the race administration and organisation, which saw over 600 runners safely marshalled around the moors. Also, thoughts now began to turn to the next big off road relay, the Calderdale Way Relay which takes place in early December.

**'This is the west, sir. When the legend becomes fact, we print the legend.'**  
**(The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance-1962)**