

Recent Press Reports

By
Colin Duffield/Phil Hodgson/Kath Brierley

Anniversary Waltz/Bunny Run

Press Date 24/04/08

Todmorden's new signing Alastair Rhodes-Dawson was the star amongst the 10 Harriers who tackled the Anniversary Waltz Fell Race in Cumbria at the weekend.

The race, won by Dark Peak's Lloyd Taggett, is fast becoming a Lake District classic and visits the peaks of Robinson, Dale Head, High Spy and Catbells before returning to the race HQ in the Newlands Valley.

Rhodes-Dawson stopped the clock in 1:58, breaking the prestigious two hour barrier and giving him 53rd place in the 420 finishers. He was followed home shortly afterwards by team mate Martin Roberts.

Closer to home, the Bunny Run season of races in Haworth continued last week with the 3rd of this year's events.

In what could best be described as wintry conditions, first Todmorden runner home was again Paul Brannigan who was 53rd in the 250 strong field, his finishing time of 20:05. Derek Donohue was next Harrier over the line in 21:04, whilst Tod's first lady home was Sue Roberts in 26:05.

A short while later, Todmorden junior Joseph Brannigan made it a family affair when he followed his father across the line in 28:15.

Three Peaks

Press Date 03/05/08

Todmorden Harriers were up against many of the best mountain runners in the world at Saturday's Three Peaks Fell Race. This year the race was also the venue for the World Long Distance Mountain Running Championships, the first time Britain has hosted this prestigious event. The Three Peaks, in its 54th year is one of the oldest classic fell races and provided a challenging course for top international athletes from 23 countries as far afield as New Zealand, Russia, South Africa and the USA. The 24 mile course includes ascents of Yorkshire's three peaks: Penyghent, Whernside and Ingleborough, each one a tough ascent in its own right, and fast sections on path and track between the peaks. The 758 runners streaming over the start line at Horton in Ribblesdale included 92 foreign competitors and the cream of British fell running. In the early part of the race Billy Burns of Salford Harriers was the first to the summit of Penyghent with a group of ten runners in hot pursuit. By the second summit of Whernside the field had stretched out with Mitja Kosoveli of Slovenia 30 seconds in front of Scotsman Jethro Lennox. However, at the top of Ingleborough these two had swapped places with Lennox pulling nearly two minutes ahead of the Slovenian but looking over his shoulder at the charge being made by Mercia's Thomas Owens. Jethro's strength held out and the Scot won gold in 2.53.39 with Owens in silver medal place only 37 seconds behind. The ladies race was dominated from start to finish by Anna Pichtrova of the Czech Republic, the World mountain Running Champion in 2007, who broke the ladies record in 3.14.43, nearly two minutes faster than the previous best time. The men's team prize went to Yorkshire club Pudsey and Bramley. The ladies team prize was won by Russia.

Todmorden Harriers put in a fine performance in such awesome company. Chris Smale, was on top form after training specifically for this event and finished 45th closely followed by team mate Jon Wright in 47th. Next Harrier home was Andrew Horsfall who crossed the line in 206th place with a time of three hours and 56 minutes. Tod's star Vet 50, Dave Collins, ran a brilliant race, finishing 162nd and leading the Tod Harriers super-veterans team to 6th position.. The Tod ladies went one better with Chris Preston, Ali Richards and Kath Brierley all putting in fine performances and finishing 5th ladies team.

Coniston/Coiners

Press Date 10/05/08

The May Day Bank Holiday Weekend saw Todmorden Harriers decamp en masse to Cumbria for the Coniston Fell Race. The exhilarating 8 mile route which follows the ridges from Wetherlam to Swirl Howe and Coniston Old Man has become a favourite of the Todmorden club and a regular fixture in the club's Fell Championship. This year a massive 32 Harriers tackled the course, many of them taking advantage of the spring weather to camp in the village and enjoy a weekend in the heart of the fells.

The race set off under clear blue skies on a perfect spring day, much in contrast to the official forecast of high winds and mountain fog. Apart from the Harriers, some of the top names from the fell running world were amongst the 300 starters who left the starting field for the first, and steepest climb of the route, the leg sapping Mouldry Bank. Multiple former winner and fell running legend Ian Holmes led the way, along with his Bingley club mate, Rob Jebb, but with Todmorden's Chris Smale and Andy Wrench in close attendance the omens looked good for a successful day for the Harriers.

As the runners made their way around the route the clear weather gave the competitors stunning views of the highest Lakeland fells as the field snaked along the narrow ridges.

On the final descent off the Old Man of Coniston, Holmes used his famous descending skills to make sure of victory, crossing the line some 200 yards clear of Jebb. Amongst the Harriers, Andy Wrench looked strong at the death, claiming a creditable 9th place, and Chris Smale finishing 20th after holding his own with the leaders until the last descent.

In the ladies race Natalie White of Bingley dominated throughout, for a time keeping pace with the elite men. Todmorden's interest at the sharp end being provided by Lakeland resident Ali Richards, who continues to make headway back towards top form after a nasty injury at the end of last year, and again forced her way into a quality ladies top ten.

Bunched just behind Richards were club mates, Jane Leonard, Chris Preston and, Claire Duffield showing how well Tod's ladies are currently performing in these Lakeland tests.

On the following Bank Holiday Monday there was fell running to be had closer to home with the Calder Valley Fell Runners organised 7 mile Coiners Fell Race. First Tod Harrier home in this was Nick Barber who continues to improve and crossed the line in 22nd place on a muddy route in a race won by Calder runner Ben Mounsey. Next Harriers home were James Riley in 30th and Colin Duffied in 40th amongst the 80 strong field.

Prior to the senior races CVFR organised a series of junior races, in which the

Tod juniors performed well. The courses are both steep and challenging, with a fast downhill finish. Although only two of the Harriers ran, they both won their respective races. Sean Carey age 14 who is fairly new to racing, and who has made considerable improvement over the last 12 months, comfortably won the three mile course under 16 race in a time of just over 22 minutes. Jack Crummett age 9 had closer competition but managed to keep 3 seconds ahead of his Calder Valley competitor, winning the one mile race in a time of 10.28.

Flower Scar/ Mytholmroyd

Press Date 15/05/08

Last Wednesday saw Todmorden Harriers reprise one of their club races as the Flower Scar Fell Race returned. The tough four mile race was rested last year but returned this year under clear blue skies and spring sunshine, and attracted a good crop of 90 runners amongst them many of the local stars of the fell running scene.

As the race started on Todmorden High School playing fields and the runners headed for Scaitcliffe and the start of the draining 1400 foot climb up to Flower Scar Moor, the fancied runners were all in the mix, these included Calder Valley Fell Runners' Ben Mounsey and Shaun Godsman, Pudsey and Bramley's Danny Hope, Horwich's James Logue and Todmorden's own Chris Smale. Amongst the women, Jo Waites of Calder Valley looked hot favourite to win, although Halifax Harrier's international junior, Holly Page and Bingley's Ruth Whitehead were both capable of providing a shock on the night.

After an initial nip and tuck battle, the runners reached the turnaround point at the trig point on the very highest point of the moor, with Smale, Mounsey and Godsman neck and neck and setting up a thrilling dash back to the valley.

It the event Godsman proved too quick on the downhill, the former Todmorden man taking the race in 28:52, with Mounsey and Smale both following within half a minute for second and third places, Smale also taking the veterans' prize.

True to form, Jo Waites took the women's' race in 33:44, some five minutes clear of the next woman.

Elsewhere in the field, Todmorden's junior star, 14 year old Sean Carey, put in a storming performance to take ninth place, taking the scalps of some genuinely good adult fell runners, his performance boding well for the future.

After the race, organiser Jon Wright thanked the runners for their support, the landowners, Mrs and Mrs Helliwell, Colin, Stephenson Feeds and the Hare and Hounds Inn for their hospitality in hosting the race HQ.

The following weekend it was business as usual for the Harriers as their Fell Championship continued at the Halifax Harriers organised Mytholmroyd Fell Race.

23 Harriers were in attendance for this seven mile tour of Wadsworth Moor.

With a sudden arrival of summer, the runners suffered in the blazing heat but the Harriers coped with the sun as well as most, first home being Andy Wrench in 3rd place, with Sean Willis second Tod man in 7th position. Alastair Rhodes-Dawson completed the counters for the team prize after also gaining a top twenty place, but Tod just missed out on the collective prize, losing out to a strong team from neighbouring club Calder Valley.

First lady Harrier was Claire Duffield, crossing the tapes as 6th woman, with club mates Sarah Warburton and Lucy Hobbs following in 6th and 8th place in the ladies rankings.

Geoff Doggett/Hendon Brook

Press Date 22/05/08

After some months frenetic fell racing, it was the turn of Todmorden Harriers road running enthusiasts to show their mettle last week with two very different races.

Warm sunshine warmed the competitors who arrived in Littleborough for the Geoff Doggett 5k last Tuesday. Organised by prolific race organiser and charity fundraiser, Andy O'Sullivan OBE, the race follows a well established race route, taking in the delights on Hollingsworth Lake en route. The race was won by Essex athlete Ian Grime, clocking a fast time of just under 16 minutes.

Six Tod runners were present, first of which was U18 Ashley Wright who put a marker down with regard to his future potential by coming in 41st in the 200 strong field. Next two Harriers home were Mark Anderton and Richard Butterwick in 48th and 49th position, Anderton squeezing in front of his club mate by just three seconds. Todmorden ladies Mel Siddal and Bev Wright both ran well to finish in 100th and 115th, whilst veteran Harrier Ian Stansfield crossed the line in 193rd.

On the following Sunday it was time to put on the road running shoes again as a number of Harriers travelled to Colne for the Hendon Brooke 13.5 Mile Road Race. A regular feature in the Tod club's road championship, this race is notorious for its' succession of hard climbs that will sap the strength of even the most determined runner. First Harrier over the tape was Duncan Ritchie with a time of 1 hour and 49 minutes. He was followed just over a minute later by mel Blackhurst, who registered as third lady overall and first veteran. Richard O'Sullivan was next Tod athlete over the line in a time of 1 hour 51 minutes, followed by Claire Duffield (1:56), and Kevin Coughlan who put in a fine performance in his debut race at longer distance to finish in 1 hour and 59.

Peter Ehrhardt completed the Tod contingent in 2 hours and five minutes.