

GRAND PRIX 2009

The winners feature on the front page; the boring statistics are below:

It's been a record breaking year for our Grand Prix and Fell and Road Championships with mere mortals making their own mark alongside Andrew Wrench's remarkable clean sweep (of which, more later).

We have had the highest ever numbers of participants – 96 members have turned out to compete in at least one race beating last year's previous best of 84. Of these 96, well over half – 57 in fact – ran four or more races.

19 qualified by doing 8 of the 33 races – a good turnout, only 1 less than last Year. 6 have qualified for the first time ever, 3 of whom are newcomers to the club: Phil Cook, Darren Tweed and Dan Taylor. Another 4 toddlers were only one more race away from qualification.

81 ran a fell race and 63 on the road and trail. This year's number of entries was 308 in the 18 fell races and 202 for the 15 road – making a grand total of 510 Tod vests appearing in our selected races – a fantastic high profile for the club.

With 3 juniors competing in the GP the age range of participants is remarkable – from an 11 year old Skye Wilson to the veteran 78 year old Derek Clutterbuck: can any other club match that?

Best attendance was 37 at the Geoff Dogget 5k in Littleborough, and good turnouts for two tough fell races – 30 at the Half Tour of Pendle and 28 at Conniston. And a special mention to Sarah Glyde for being the sole representative at the Macclesfield half marathon (for some reason not included in next year's GP – the race not Sarah that is).

The real talking point of the year was Andrew Wrench. It is a phenomenal - and unprecedented - achievement to win all four titles in one season. He is now Grand Prix, Fell, Road and Club Champion – suitable reward for being this season's most prolific GP entrant, competing in a total of 17 races.

And records have tumbled along the way. He has broken Brian Schofields total of highest number of GP points that has stood since 1999. He now has the highest winning total in the Club Championship – as a measure this year he scored nearly 100 points more than Paul Brannigan's (no mean runner himself) winning total last year. And remember that the Club Championship is not based on the handicap points system like the Grand Prix.

The Fell title is his for the 8th time in 12 years, whilst his first winning of the Road Championship secured him a nomination for the 'Most Improved Runner' award. He was

the first Tod Harrier home in all but four of the races he competed in and on the fells he registered a 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th place; road and trail being equally impressive with a 1st, two 3rds and a 4th. And these are in the open categories, not as his V40 status.

So, what is left to say about him? Well as he now has recorded this year a record number of points in the GP and Club Championship, and holds the best score in the Fells set in 1999 – that just leaves Jon Cordingleys Road record to go. Worth coming out of retirement for?

GP TEN TROPHY TANKARD

As a Club, Tod Harriers has long regarded the GP as the focus for our runners. The races are there to encourage members old, and especially new, to get out and participate alongside each other. It provides a focus for discussion in the pub after pack runs, more recently on the forum, and a meeting point for members who live further afield.

But for it not to be a 'dead duck' - simply a hunting ground for top runners or won by the same people each year - it needs as many members from all levels of ability to turn out and commit to running GP races. To recognise the valuable input that club members make to further the viability of the GP it was decided this year to reward runners who have qualified for total of ten GPs.

Although it only means running eight races, statistically few have had the devotion or luck with injuries to pass the landmark of successfully qualifying year on year. In the past 12 seasons just two club stalwarts have managed it.

Since the new format for the GP was devised in 1997 only one person has ever managed to get eight races completed every year – (he like everyone else was allowed the Foot & Mouth season off).

Peter Ehrhardt in 12 years has run an impressive 155 GP races – an average of nearly 13 per year – and probably has represented the Club in most Calderdale Way and Pennine Bridleway relays in that time.

Paul Brannigan has completed 10 of the 12 GPs (missing out in only 2006 and 2007). and has frequently finished high up in the GP points total. During these past 13 years he has claimed the Road championship 8 times and the Club Championship 3 times making him the leading top man in both.

Both have made huge contributions to the club and both deserve to be the first recipients of this new award. With the same dedication, in a few years time it could also be you.

Congratulations to Kath Brierley for being voted Clubman of the Year.