

Kendal Winter League

Race 1 - Scout Scar (two reports)

Race 1 in the 2009 Winter League Series and its cold, bright and sunny, in fact, just another typical day's weather in the Lake District (honest). Anybody worried about the plunging pound and soaring cost of overseas travel should look no further - book your holiday in Cumbria, spend your money here and take in a couple of fell races.

I've just had a look back at last year's race report and this is what I wrote.....

"Helm Hill prides itself on being a family club with an emphasis on junior participation so it was fantastic to see 38 kids lining up in the U12 race"

Well, we need to set our sights a little higher because this year we had an astonishing sixty three runners lining up in the under 12's.....what a turn out! The ground was hard and when they set off it sounded like a herd of wildebeest stampeding across the Serengeti. A great turnout from Helm Hill, well supported by Dallam, and a special mention to local school Ghyllside who fielded at least 10 runners sporting team shirts. Thanks to Dan Duxbury who coordinated their attendance.

115 runners took part in the junior races.....surely a record.....and 91 in the seniors. Great to see three lady runners in the Helm vest.....Jen, Lindsey and Kath represented the club brilliantly (only another 11 races to go.....any other ladies willing to step up to the plate?!). Seniors race won by Tom Addison, closely followed by Mark A and Alastair D.....(I think we need a team prize in these events)

Thanks to Shaun, Mike and team for organising. Tim

What a wonderful day, the hordes of youngsters made the organisation a pleasure, but timekeeping and number logging a nightmare!

Sixty three finely tuned fellrunners in the U12's category, no doubt fuelled by loads of chocolate, lined up for a fast blast, quickly followed by 24 athletes in the U14's and the 26 in the U17's races. All of these races were very competitive, with only a few seconds separating the first three home in each category. It was great to see so many youngsters at the start, but will they go to Firbank in the wind and rain, which usually accompanies this race fixture!

In the seniors, 91 hardy soles, stripped off to short shorts and singlets, with the odd tee shirt or old jumper keeping out the cold. Tom, Mark and Alasdair set a scorching pace at the front and had disappeared by the time I got through the gate in the first field (Top Gear's Stig better watch out) – are these the fastest things on two legs in Kendal? Chuffing along in mid-pack, warm ups are important, it was good to see others puffing and blowing their way up the

small, but testing climb, around the mushroom and back – Tom, by the time I'd got close to the mushroom, had long since passed in the other direction, quickly followed by Mark and Alasdair. Jenny Dunn paced her race to win by a small margin from Hazel Robinson, so Helm claimed 5 category winners out of the 8 available.

Puffing Billy came in a creditable 10th, with other Helmers putting me to shame – John Bagge, Ben Procter, as I, fat boy slimming, careered over the finish line, collapsing in a heap!

Hopefully, the race timings were better, but would appreciate comments on the course or making changes to the organisation on the day.

My thanks go to Billy Procter and Mike Addison helping me mark the course out on the Saturday, wife and daughter (Fiona and Jenny) for number crunching/timekeeping and Billy again for helping collect the flags after the race on Sunday.

Shaun Addison

Race 2 - Firbank

Firbank usually throws up something special on the weather front and this year was no exception.....after 6 weeks of cloudless skies, and calm, cold conditions the weather gods decided to throw everything they could at a small muddy field just off the M6. There aren't many sporting events which would survive these conditions but the Kendal Winter league is one of them.....I can't imagine Ronaldo, Andy Murray, or even Chris Hoy coping with what we had to today. And, once again, the attendance was brilliant.....44 under 12s, 84 Seniors.....all races had bigger fields than last year.....and all the races were very competitive.

Special mention to all the individuals who helped to organise the event today.....Chris S, George, Patrick, Paul T (who flagged the course).....and others press ganged into taking part.....the conditions really were atrocious. I knew it was going to be a tough race when Billy and Shaun warned the seniors at the start of our race about the ice, the fog, the fact that some of the flags had blown away, the wind, the cold...and various other hazards. But we all made it around. Apologies that some of the timings may be missing.....the stop watch suffered a malfunction.....as did Chris Scofield's umbrella, bits of which were last seen in Penrith.

Thanks also to all the participants and their supporters/parents.....If there were any first time runners taking part today, don't worry, it's not normally like this.....sometimes it's worse!

See you next week.....Tim

Race 3 - Whitestones

I have copied Mike's report from the gazette.

HORWICH'S Darren Kay won the third race of the Kendal Winter League season at Whitestones, Staveley-in-Cartmel, despite having difficulty finding the flags to navigate by.

Both he and Dark Peak's Mike Robinson stopped on a couple of occasions to assess where they were on what is a tricky horseshoe-shaped out and back route over boggy and uneven ground.

There have been different winners in each of the three races so far and this coming Sunday's event over Birkrigg Common, Ulverston, will suit the "fast lads."

Bingley's Natalie White repeated her Whitestones success of last year by heading the ladies from the off while Kendal's Louise Roberts ran strongly to finish second ahead of Ambleside's Hazel Robinson.

The U17s runs a different and more testing course than all the other age groups with Ulverston's Tom Doyle finding the steep climb very much to his liking. He dominated from the run out and when nobody challenged him in the valley bottoms he powered away from the rest of the field on the climb and used his descending speed to hold off Wharfedale's Jonathan Bradshaw, who is currently leading the championship.

Helm Hill's Melanie Hyder "demolished" her time of last year to comfortably win the U17s girls' race with Dallam's Cathy Gill in second.

James Knox made it a hat-trick of victories in the U14 boys' category with his nearest challenger being Rossendale's Danny Walsh. In the girls' U14 race Helm Hill's Megan Stuart turned the tables on her team mate Lauren Munro-Bennett to win by seven seconds.

Keighley & Craven's Phil Done made his intentions clear from the start of the U12 boys' race although Helm Hill's Oliver Willink and Ben Kent were closing him down on the run in. Lorna Nunwick, of Helm Hill, set off at a blistering pace and was lying second overall behind Done as the field was a third of the way up the hill but she then ran out of steam. She still finished seventh overall and won the girls' race by 28 seconds with team mate Mary O'Reilly showing good form to finish second.

Race 4 – Birkrigg Common

BIRKRIGG Common provided the setting for the fourth race in this season's series.

A typically cold and breezy day on the Furness peninsula greeted runners, who, when not in the heat of Kendal Winter League (KWL) battle, enjoyed

magnificent views across Morecambe Bay to the Lancashire coastline and Blackpool Tower in the distance (it is there, honestly, you just have to look hard enough!)

First off, after eventually getting the little whippets back somewhere near to the start, were the under-12s, all 57 of them.

The short blast up and down the front of the common is always keenly contested. I remember as a junior (the press cutting still resides in the Procter scrapbook if no-one believes me), winning the under-12s at Birkrigg in a race which saw the first seven runners finish within 12 seconds of each other, or something like that.

Sunday's opening race wasn't as close as that, but still saw the first seven, led by Keighley and Craven starlet Phil Done, cross the line within a 30-second period.

Helm Hill's Lorna Nunwick, who lives just down the road from Birkrigg, won the girls' race for the fourth successive weekend and maintained her unbeaten record.

As the hordes descended on the finishing funnel, one inept organiser (no names mentioned) couldn't scribble down all the numbers quickly enough. Thanks to the kind lady who saw me (okay, yes, it was me) struggling and came to my rescue.

Note to all future organisers: recording the numbers is a two-person job! Lesson learned.

With all the under-12s back safely back and accounted for, the under-14s were let of the leash to complete arguably the best course of the day.

Helm Hill speed merchant James Knox flew out of the traps and sprinted up the opening climb to leave his rivals trailing – an all too familiar experience for anyone brave enough to take on a hill reps session with James and the rest of Billy's training group this winter!

James, who less than 24 hours earlier won gold at the prestigious Northern Cross Country Championships in St Helens, maintained his advantage to cross the finish line first and complete a fantastic weekend double.

First girl was Sarah Hodgson, from Lancaster and Morecambe AC, who beat the fast-finishing Helm duo of Megan Stuart and Lauren Munro-Bennett.

The under-17s event was once again highly-competitive, particularly at the sharp end. Ashley Kay, from Rossendale, recorded his second victory of the 2009 series, beating Tom Sessford and Joss Addison into second and third respectively. Melaine Hyder was again a comfortable victor of the girls' race and maintained her 100 per cent winning record in this year's KWL.

A total of 59 runners tackled the senior course, which, after taking in the initial short climb to the trig point, drops off the back of the common all the way down towards the village Bardsea and the beautiful coastline (if it wasn't for the main road a bit further down, we'd love to have included a beach section). After that it's a surprisingly tough drag all the way back to the top of the common before a sprint back down to the finish.

Tom Addison was, as expected, a class apart and had established a sizeable lead by the time the runners had reached the common summit for the first time. His winning time of 18 mins 45 secs put him nearly two minutes ahead of runner-up Chris Howie, of Ulverston-based club GSK Hoad Hill Harriers. Hot on his heels were Wharfedale duo, and KWL regulars, Chris Newman and Sam Watson.

Another Wharfedale runner, Kate Rogan, was the first lady.

Thanks to mum (Yvonne Procter) and Bethan Burke for taking the entries and compiling the results so quickly, and to dad for helping us flag the course. We hope you all enjoyed your day on Birkrigg.

First-time KWL race organisers Lee and Ben Procter

Race 5 - Fairmile Race

I know I keep going on about the numbers of racers each week but it really is remarkable how many people are turning up for these events. A quick look back on UK Results shows that in 2003 there were 28 under 12s.....this year there were 56. In 2003 there were 9 U17s.....on Sunday there were 26.....and there were 44 more seniors racing this year! Great to see and thanks to everyone who participated.....not forgetting parents and supporters.

A cold breezy day.....but the snow stayed away and we even got the occasional splash of sunshine. Fortunately it wasn't as windy as it was on Saturday when Dave Appleyard and I flagged the route.....(Billy P had been earlier in the day to flag the descent). The only way to get the flags in at the top was to crawl on all fours.....and we had to turn back and descend the way we had come because it was virtually impossible to walk against the wind. Dave put down his rucksack to hammer in a flag - and it was gone.....closely followed by Dave! If anyone finds a pair of overtrousers please contact Dave Appleyard because they disappeared somewhere over the Howgills (fortunately he wasn't wearing them at the time). He posted an advertisement in the Glasgow Herald's lost and found column but he's not too optimistic.

Thanks to all who helped on the day.....Billy (for flagging part of the route), Dave A, Harriet, Lauren, Richard, Alastair (registrations and timekeeping), Mike and Hazel (for helping collect the flags)

Tim

Race 6 – Fell End Clouds

Cancelled due to snow.

Race 7 - Barbon

The Barbon course is a daunting sight, particularly on a misty day like today. Standing at the bottom by the river the hill seems to rise vertically and disappear into the clouds.....cold, damp,bleak. If some of the seniors were a bit apprehensive, spare a thought for the U12s!

If we could play music at Winter League races then Barbon would be accompanied by Wagner's 'Ride of the Valkyries'(film buffs will recognise it from 'Apocalypse Now')..or the theme tune from The Omen. Check it out on iTunes.....you'll get the picture.

Knee trembler, lung buster.....its difficult to describe the ascent.....suffice to say that's its hard work. A bit of flat at the top and then its round the cairn and hell for leather on the way down as you descend faster than Lloyds Bank Share price (and that's fast).

Well done to everyone who took part.....this is what fell running is all about. Results have been collated over a couple of glasses of wine so should be on the website soon.

Thanks to Barry Scholes who flagged the route, Pauline and George who handled the registrations..and various other helpers on the day. Good turnout, the sun made a brief appearance.....see you at Cautley Spout.

Tim

Race 10 - Austwick

Results for Austwick done and dusted.....and posted to the website on Sunday evening. How's that for service?

Great turnout again today.....breezy and cold with the odd flurry of sleet thrown in for good measure. Apologies if any of the U12 results are inaccurate...there was a stampede of finishers around the 8 minute mark and the timers were overwhelmed. Hopefully there aren't any major errors.

Thanks again to all the helpers.....Barry for flagging the course.....Pauline and George for registrations etc. These events only take place thanks to the efforts of volunteers so if you are a regular participant and you would like to be involved, just ask! The

more help the better.

The competition is hotting up as we reach the final race next week.....the permutations are too complicated to work out this late on a Sunday night but the updated League tables show that there is still lots to play for.

See you at Elterwater.

Tim