

## Winter League Race reports 2008

**Race 11 - Elterwater - March 16th** - Surely the most picturesque of the Winter League fixtures..... sunshine on the hills, bit of snow on the tops, the valley looking at its best today. If any one doubts the increasing popularity of the League just look at the following statistics (courtesy of John Schofields UK Results website). The last four times this race has been run the seniors field has totalled 29, 34, 35 and 55. Today an impressive 66 runners were at the start out of a total field (inc juniors) of around 125.

All racers followed the same route up the hill today.....nice little climb from the start to get the heart pounding, across the bog, through the bracken and then into some serious climbing. U17's turned at the first summit, senior's ran along the ridge to Silver Howe. Conditions were good although there seemed to be an unusually high number of fallers today with a few bloodied knees at the finish.

Thanks to Russell, Pauline, Gary and Lyndon for flagging the route, timekeeping, registrations etc.

This was the last points race of the season so the final positions were to be decided today. Given the way in which the points are allocated....best 7 races count for seniors etc.....there will be a slight delay before the necessary calculations are made. The Helm Hill computing programme will shortly swing into action (is that you Alistair?).....and the final table will be published with an appropriate fanfare as soon as possible.

No race next week.....(Sunday just won't be the same).....but a real cracker on Sunday 30th March when the 2008 League will formally draw to a close with a run up Arant Haw from Sedbergh People's Hall. Hope you can make it! - Tim

**Race 10 - Austwick - March 9th** - Kendal Winter League makes the national press.....yes seriously! Every Saturday The Guardian newspaper runs a competition for budding photographers asking for photos on a given theme. Last week the subject was 'Ambition' and the second placed photo, submitted by Andrew Holden, featured this year's race at Cautley Spout. It was a great picture showing Andrew Symonds leading the way with the field strung out down the hill below.....unfortunately, given Andrew's substantial lead you need a magnifying glass to see the rest of us but a great shot nevertheless. Despite the publicity, however, I didn't notice a particular influx of Guardian readers at the race today.....!

The Austwick race always feels like a bit of an away fixture.....a drive out of the Lakes and into the Dales, and a slightly different field of runners. The terrain is familiar though and can be put in the same category as Scout Scar, Fell End Clouds and Birkrigg Common. Great scenery (as always), some enthusiastic support and good racing weather.....bit cool and breezy on top with a touch of rain for the seniors race to keep the descents over the screes interesting.

Another great turnout.....37 in the U12s race (compared to 17 last year).....and some really competitive racing. The U17 boys, in particular, is shaping up to be a

fantastic contest with an ever changing list names in the top 4. Thanks, as always, to the organisers on the day.

Next week is the last points race.....and it's all to play for. Whether you are challenging for the title, hoping to break into the top three or just trying to finish ahead of that bloke who keeps overtaking you before the turn for home, make sure you are at Elterwater. Every point counts!! - Tim

**Race 9 - Fell End Clouds - March 2nd** - A new route on the fell racing calendar and I think most people seemed pleasantly surprised by both the location and the geography. Driving out of Sedbergh on the A683 and you're in classic Howgills' territory.....steep sided grassy hills. dramatic waterfalls such as Cautley Spout etc.....A couple of miles further on, however, and the landscape changes.....its limestone country. Rocky outcrops, stony ground, a few storm blasted trees and plenty of grikes and clints to keep the geology students happy. There were even a few shake holes to be avoided. Add to this some great views, easy parking and the question is.....is this going to become a regular fixture on the Winter League calendar?

Fraser Livesey had marked out a fast undulating course of around about 5 miles for the seniors....up the hill onto the limestone pavements, a wide circular route which took you past a couple of disused kilns, almost back down to the road before heading back up the hill to rejoin the initial path back to the start. The ground was hard underfoot, the wind was howling, but the rain stayed away.

Despite the fact that it was Mother's day attendance at the race was again good. All those at the race who had Mums to think about had obviously crammed all their pampering into the 2 hours before leaving home, had elaborate treats planned for when they returned, or had completely forgotten about it.

Some really competitive racing as always. A particular well done to the U17s who had to contend with a herd(?) of 15 or so Fell Ponies who seemed determined to wander up the race route just as the runners were passing.

Thanks to Fraser for the excellent course, Dave and Sue for the registrations, Richard, Jeff, Hannah (?) Pauline, Mike for timekeeping, collecting flags etc.

It's now on to Austwick, the penultimate scoring racing in this year's league. See you there ....unless you're a V40 in which case this race is definitely not for you ( I need the points). Tim

**Race 8 - Cautley Spout - Feb 24th** - Race 8 and its another monster hill in the Howgills.....typical Helm Hill Runners' territory. It has been said that to be truly great a fell race should start and finish at a pub.....and this one is no exception with the Cross Keys Inn sitting at the foot of the hill. What is exceptional is that this is a Temperance pub.....so alcohol free I'm afraid (any complaints should be made to Mrs Edith Adelaide Bunney, who removed the liquor license in 1902). This is still a great race though....a sort of Fairmile horseshoe combined with Barbon slopes with a couple of river crossings thrown in.

Before giving the details of the race a quick well done to a couple of Helm Hill Runners who completed the Bob Graham last week. Gary Beardwood, Simon (Walley?) and friend Paul Jackson all completed the round last Saturday supported by a host of Helm Hill members. I helped on the second leg and we were rewarded by the most spectacular sunrise from the top of Helvellyn. The weather was kind.....brilliant blue skies, very little wind.....but cold! One reason for mentioning this is the impact that this (for me) long trip out in the hills had on my performance at Cautley where it felt as if I was running in diving boots. As you get older you just know that your powers of recovery are going to be reduced.....nothing to do with the Bob Graham leg, that wasn't the problem, it was the celebratory pints in the Vats Bar on Friday that finished me off.....

Back to today's racing.....4 gruelling courses marked out by Paul Tuson and Richard Sewell on Saturday night in the teeth of a howling gale. The seniors race was won by a big margin by someone in a white vest.....he was virtually a dot on the horizon by the time I first looked upwards from halfway up the hill. I do know that Tom and Mark Addison had a closely fought race for second and third with Tom just finishing ahead. Some familiar names amongst the other winners.....Ben Johnstone, Melanie Hyder, James Knox (who pretty much ran every step of the way in the U14s), Alex Till were the ones that I saw.

Well done to all those who took part.....see you for a pint at the Cross Keys!

Thanks to all those who organised today...it went like clockwork.

See you next week for a new race on the Calendar.....Fell End Clouds.....check the website for details. It promises to be a good one!

Race 6 - Helm Hill - 10th February - At least 6 months must have elapsed since Fairmile because the Helm race was run in August sunshine with a heat haze over the Lake District hills. What a cracker! And there was a great turnout to match.

If the number of juniors taking part is an indication of the health of fell running..... then it's in good shape. Over the last 5 years the number of runners in the U12 race has been 35 (2003) followed by 26, 35, 23, and 28. Today there was a record field of 48 running.....cheered on by an enthusiastic crowd of supporters. The Helm is a superb place to watch the racing with some great views of the runners who had to negotiate a challenging new course.

There was some terrific racing on offer today.....Rory Addison avenged his defeat of last week beating James Knox into second place in the U14.....the lead for the U17 race was being really keenly contested at the half way stage with at least 4 runners in contention and Melanie Hyder continued her fantastic form with victory in the U17 girls. The seniors race was an epic battle. Jon Deegan lead the race until the trig point was reached for the second time.....Alastair D then overtook him with a lightening descent of the short sharp run down and he was closely followed by Mark Addison who made it a Helm Hill first and second. Well done to all who raced, won, sweated round the various courses and thanks to those who organised..Dave Appleyard, Paul Tuson, Mike Wilson, Billy P and others.

I don't seem to run particularly well in the heat, so the last thing I needed today was to be pushed hard to the line by Helm Hill's own Paula Radcliffe in the shape of Jennifer Dunn in her first race for 18 months, after the birth of Cameron. Great to have you back Jen! Can't be at Barbondale next week..... Have a great race

**Race 5 - Fairmile - 3rd February** - Many thanks to all those people (and there were many) who pointed out that I had apparently put a curse on the day by suggesting that the weather at Fairmile was always good. The Helm Hill legal team is currently seeking advice from the courts as to whether or not the words 'sunshine and blue skies guaranteed', which featured in my last report, constitute a legally binding agreement.

Apologies to anyone who turned up with suncream and shades expecting to bask in warm sunshine whilst indulging in picnic type activities, you will have been severely disappointed. It was a stinker.....dry, yes.....but cold and windy in the extreme. Any snow had pretty much disappeared but the wind was ripping across the fells and everyone who ran today deserves some sort of mention for dedication, bravery, or possibly, foolhardiness.

Courage was definitely in evidence in the U12 race.....it's a tough course, straight up, straight down. There were a few tears, some red ears, but mostly a grim determination to get up and get back down without being blown to Carlisle. Special mention to one (very) small runner who completed the route with hands very firmly stuffed in his pockets all the way. (I watched the race from the turning point so unfortunately missed the winners.....but you know who you are!)

In the U14's James Knox won his first race in this year's league beating off a strong challenge from Rory Addison (revenge next week Rory?). Alex Till and Melanie Hyder won the U17 races. well done. Typically, there are gaps in my reporting so apologies, but you can fill them in once the full results come out.....

The seniors' race was well suited to runners with one leg shorter than the other.....at least half of it was spent running at a 45 degree angle to the wind.....it was horrendous on top. Leaning forward to prevent yourself being blown backwards, hands on knees, eyes watering, trying to inch forward against the gale.....and that was coming down the hill! I thought Dave Richardson was trying to overtake me....actually he was just using me for shelter.

Big thanks to all the organisers.....Yvonne and Sue who took the names and kept time; Dave, George, Richard, Mike who managed the car parking; Billy, Shaun and Tom who flagged the route (on Friday night?!) and everyone else who contributed. And of course the supporters.....hearing the words 'come on Helm' doesn't half make a difference you know!

Next week we move to the Club's spiritual home.....The Helm. Following today's fiasco I've checked the forecast, consulted the British Metrological Office and studied the seaweed on the window sill. Based on all the cumulative evidence I can confidently predict, with a 100% guarantee, that there will be weather of some description at Helm next week.....so come prepared and don't say I didn't warn you!!

Just checked the FRA Forum and Alastair has posted the top 3 results..so here you go

U12boys - Ben Johnston (Wharfe) Phil Done (Keighley) James Hall (Bingley)  
U12 girls - Megan Stuart (Helm) Lorna Nunwick (Helm) Lauren Appleyard (Helm)  
U14 boys - James Knox (Helm) Rory Addison (Helm) Theo Messenger Jones  
(Broughton)  
U14 girls - Robin Goodfellow (Dallam) Jane Gill (Dallam) Lauren Munro Bennett  
(Helm)  
U17 Boys - Alex Till (Dallam) Ashley Kaye (Rossendale) Matthew Fretwell (Settle)  
U17 Girls - Melanie Hyder (Helm) Brooke Van Hindsbergh (Sedbergh) Nicola  
Jackson (Preston)  
Seniors - Alastair Dunn (Helm) Tim Austin (Ambleside) Tom Addison (Helm)  
Ladies - Natalie White (Bingley) Sharon Taylor (Bingley) Hazel Robinson (u/a)  
See you next week Tim

#### **Race 4 - Birkrigg Common - 27th January**

Birkrigg Common has a history of prehistoric occupation evidenced by a mysterious Druids' Circle.....a concentric ring of stones dating from megalithic times. Only 30 examples of these circles exist in the UK, the most famous of which is, of course, Stonehenge. Thousands of years ago Neanderthal man could be seen running across the moorland at Birkrigg in search of primitive pleasures, clad only in the most basic garments, the sounds of grunting and gasping echoing across the Common. Which brings me nicely to the 4th Race in the Kendal Winter league.....

Another good turnout as 150 or so runners gathered outside Ulverston for a short, fast, circular race around the Common. Fantastic views, a runnable course, cool and breezy - the perfect way to spend a Sunday lunchtime in fact.

An international flavour to today's race with two representatives from across the channel competing for the first time. Yngwie Vanhoucke from Belgium was coming over for the weekend with his Dad to watch the band Linkin Park and were looking for a cross country race near Manchester.....the web threw up Helm Hill Runners.....Birkrigg Common. They drove up from Folkestone on Saturday and here they were! Not often that a fell race in Ulverston can boast a representative from Flanders Athletic Club. Mind you, it was a bit of a shock to his system.....Yngwie is more used to competing in Holland (flat, flat, flat) where he is a cross country star, so the hill was a challenge.....good job it wasn't Barbon week! We also welcomed Benoit Bessaney from St Etienne who took part in the U17.

Thanks to John Bagge and a posse of helpers who made sure it all went smoothly today.

On a slightly separate note.....another 70 juniors were racing today....all wearing Walshes or similar. In my experience, running shoes for the U18s last about 8 months or so before they get too small. There must be a thriving market in second/third hand shoes to be exploited. There's a Sales/Wants page on the Helm Hill site.....so if you want to trade, let us know (Ps I need a pair of 5s for Jake). Thanks to George from Blackpool for this suggestion.

Serious stuff next week as we head for Fairmile.....sunshine and blue sky guaranteed! Tim

The top three in each race.....

U12 Boys

Ben Johnstone (Wharfedale) 5.04

Thomas Taylor (Kendal) 5.14

David Goad (Helm) 5.26

U12 Girls

Megan Stuart (Helm) 5.36

Lorna Nunwick (Helm) 5.45

Freya Sadler (Barrow) 6.03

U14 Boys

Rory Addison (Helm) 9.05

Daniel Walsh (Rossendale) 9.20

Theo Messenger-Jones (Broughton) 9.27

U14 Girls

Robin Goodfellow (Dallam) 10.12

Lauren Munro-Bennet (Helm) 11.03

Joel Campbell (Kendal) 11.11

U17 Boys

Ashley Kay (Rossendale) 15.07

Alex Till (Dallam) 15.15

Scott Thwaites (Helm) 15.23

U17 Girls

Melanie Hyder (Helm) 17.03

Chessie Messenger-Jones (Broughton) 20.03

Cathy Gill (Dallam) 20.29

Senior Men

Mark Addison (Helm) 18.21

Jon Deegan (Ambleside) 18.47

Tom Addison Helm 18.54

Senior Ladies

Hazel Robinson (U/A).....Hazel, when are you going to join Helm?!

Kate Rogan (Wharfedale)

Lynn Whittaker (Wharfedale)

**Race 3 - Whitestones - 20th January**

Mud, mud, glorious mud.....ok, did anybody see anything that looked remotely like 'white stones'...the only ones that I saw were covered in thick, glutinous mud, mud of every possible description, mud in bogs, mud in streams, mud hiding under piles of other mud.

Not having done this race before I asked a couple of people what I should expect and was told that the ground would be hard and fast, firm under foot, a mixture of flat tracks and short grass.....thanks for the advice guys.

A few highlights from the day:

James Hall has got off to a great start in the U12 boys.....three wins out of three.....although Ben Johnston got within 4 seconds today - great effort.

Megan Stuart also has a perfect record so far in the U12 girls.....with Lorna Nunwick making her work hard with 3 second places in a row

The U14 boys is shaping up to be a competition between Rory Addison and James' Knox.....James performance deserves special mention as this is his first year stepping up into a new age group. The two of them had a titanic battle on the final descent today with Rory holding on by 4 seconds.....the best finish of the day? (only if you discount my brilliant run in to the finish to grab a mid 30 position from absolutely no one in the seniors' race )

A similar story in the U14 girls with Robin Goodfellow winning the first three races.....chased in by Lauren Munro-Bennett today

The U17 Boys looks as if its going to be really open.....Alex Till won today having improved from finishing 6th in Race 1.....and 2nd in race 2.(most improved runner so far?) Matt Fretwell, Scott Thwaites and Ashley Kay are also in the mix

What can we say about the U17 girls where Helm Hill's Melanie Hyder is dominating. All credit to Brooke van Hinsbergh who put in a great run today and kept the winning margin down to 26 seconds

Over to the seniors and it's no surprise that Natalie White from Bingley won today.....if she turns up to race she seems to win! (Sorry Natalie I don't have a time.....results out shortly). In the senior men Tom Cornthwaite (Blackburn Harriers) turned up to push Tom and Mark Addison into second and third place respectively.....no mean feat. The seniors' competition looks wide open this year. (Apologies if I have got any of the facts wrong.....a mixture of my eyewitness report and the fact that I scribbled the headlines down on a scrap of paper at the end of the day.....my handwriting's not the best).

Thanks to the organisers today.....not sure who put the flags out and collected in them today but you deserve special mention because fighting your way through the mud once was an effort, but twice?! See you next week. Tim

### **Race 2 - Firbank Fell - 13th January**

A muddy field next to the hard shoulder of the M6, high winds ripping across the fells, driving rain, with a telephone mast and barbed wire fences thrown in for good measure.....why would anybody in their right minds want to spend Sunday lunchtime on Firbank Fell in the middle of January. Well of course.....its Race 2 of Helm Hill's Kendal Winter League that's why!!

Even in my relatively short fell racing career certain places have become associated with particular types of weather. Fairmile?....clear blue skies, a hoar frost, hard ground underfoot. Scout Scar?.....not bad, usually a good view of poor weather happening elsewhere. Firbank?.....batten down the hatches, pack the spare clothes and make a flask, there's going to be a storm blowing!

Despite the weather 140 runners turned up support the event today.....and once again the under 12's was really well attended with 34 braving the elements.....and for at least 5 of these this was their very first race - what an introduction to the world of fell running! Thanks to all the parents for their support and encouragement...its the taking part that matters not the winning (I keep telling myself). There was also great representation from other clubs.....Dallam and Sedbergh School particularly.

Top Tip for anybody thinking of helping out at future races.....the worse the weather, the better it is to help.....the only warming up I did today was thanks to Chris Schofield's electrically heated car seats as we registered the entries....

Google 'Firbank Fell' and you'll find out the its the birthplace of the Quaker movement.....in June 1652, George Fox delivered a sermon to a 'multitude' of over 1,000 who were won over by his message and went on to form the 'Society of Friends'. In January 2008, a slightly smaller multitude of 67 lined up at the start of the senior race to hear Richard Sewell (Chairman of Helm Hill) deliver a slightly shorter sermon.....'The race is two laps - off you go'....and off we went.

One of the shortest events on the calendar its still a hard race run at a high pace. Its a circular course but bizarrely, you seem to be running into the wind all the way round.....fell running's equivalent to Murphy's Law? Anyway, this week I'm slightly better informed as Richard has E-mailed through the top three positions in each race.....well done to all.

#### U12 Boys:

James Hull - Bingley: 6.13

Ben Johnstone - Wharfedale: 6.19

Thomas Taylor - Kendal: 6.26

#### U12 Girls:

Megan Stuart - Helm: 7.00

Lorna Nunwick - Helm: 7.21

Charlotte Milligan - Helm: 7.43

#### U14 Boys:

Rory Addison - Helm: 8.25

James Knox - Helm: 8.37

Dale Sutton - Dallam: 9.40

#### U14 Girls:

Robin Goodfellow - Dallam: 10.05

Beth Dutson - U/A: 10.24

Lauren Munro-Bennett - Helm: 10.33

#### U17 Boys:

Ashley Kay - Rossendale: 11.36

Alex Till - Dallam: 11.47

Scott Thwaites - Helm: 11.52

#### U17 Girls:

Melanie Hyder - Helm: 13.22

Jenny Addison - Helm: 15.23

Cathy Gill - Dallam: 16.08

#### Senior Men

Mark Addison - Helm: 22.13

Tom Addison - Helm: 22.33  
Mike Robinson - Dark Peak: 24.04  
Senior Women  
Hazel Robinson - U/A: 26.42  
Nicola Davies - Borrowdale: 29.28  
Pauline Symonds - Kendal: 31.13

### **Race 1 - Scout Scar - 6th January**

This report is going to be heavy on description and low on fact as the results won't appear on the website for a couple of days but hopefully you'll get the picture.

Despite reports on the national news of avalanches sweeping the Lake District, the first Winter League race of 2008 went ahead as planned in bright sunshine.

The first surprise of the day was that Mike and Shaun Addison had planned a new route for the race (I'd been tipped off by Mike at the cheese counter in Booth's earlier in the week - always a useful place to get information). There had also been advance warning in the Wezzie on Friday.....so we were guaranteed course records and everyone could go home with a 'PB' against their name. I won't mention the fact that some dedicated individuals had been training hard on the old route for the past month in preparation for the race!

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.....what a great sight. The other races were also well attended so well done to everyone who took part.

The seniors' race was at least 15 minutes more challenging than the old course with the flags taking the runners across the Scar on a varied, up and down route. Even though it was an out and back race it was easy to lose track of where you had been and I'm sure they managed to include an extra 'up' on the return...at least it felt like it.

Early drama at the first gate when Billy P took a tumble.....he continued in the race however.....although it wasn't until the last half mile of the race that he overtook me. This is the 4th year that I've done the Winter league and I think its the first time I've actually had the chance to see him running!

I haven't seen the final results but at the turn (the Mushroom) Mark Addison and Paul Dugdale had a clear lead over Alastair D and (I think) Tim Austin....(who had 14 stitches in a leg injury at the Wansfell Race 10 days ago). Based on my eyewitness report I can confidently predict that the winner was Paul/Alastair/Mark/Tim\* (delete as applicable)

Thanks to Mike, Shaun and co for the organisation of the day - Tim Murray