



NFR CHAMPIONSHIP

2006 RACES

12 races to choose from. Minimum of 3 (one of each distance), maximum of 6 (2 of each distance) to count. Points awarded per the British Championship method.

5 March – Grey's Pike
Kielder Castle, 5 miles, BS

26 March – Brough Law
Ingram Valley, 5 miles, AS

25 April – Carlton Challenge
Near Stokesley, 5 miles, BS

20 May – Fairfield Horseshoe
Near Ambleside, 9 miles, AM

25 June – Windy Gyle
Barrowburn, 9 miles, BM

1 July – Chevy Chase
Wooler Youth Hostel, 20 miles, BL

15 July – Ingleborough
Ingleton, 7 miles, AM

19 August – Weasdale Horseshoe
Newbiggin on Lune, 8 miles, AM

16 September – Three Shires Race
Little Langdale, 12 miles, AL

21 October – The Screes
Nether Wasdale, 5 miles, AS

18 November – Tour of Pendle
Barley, 17 miles, AL

The championship races have been chosen by Jane Grundy and Geoff Davis. The Chevy Chase and Tour of Pendle are pre-entry. All the others are entry on the day.

Full details of the races are available on the NFR website and in the FRA calendar.

It is likely that there will be NFR Lake District Week-ends coinciding with the Fairfield Horseshoe and The Screes races.

2005 RESULTS

Senior Women

- 1 Karen Robertson*
- 2 Louise Wilkinson*
- Katherine Davis

V40 Women

- Jane Grundy
- Jane Walker

V45 Women

- 1 Susan Davis*
- Charlotte Roberts

V50 Women

- Pat Cooper

Senior Men

- 1 Morgan Donnelly*
- 2 John Duff*
- 3 Chris Little*

V40 Men

- 1= David Armstrong and Mike Jeffrey*
- 3 David Atkinson*
- 4 Paul Appleby*

V45 Men

- 1 Geoff Davis*
- Paul Hainsworth
- Garry Owens

V50 Men

- 1 Peter Reed*
- John Dallinson
- Paul Jameson

V55 Men

- Terry Hart
- Ian Richardson
- Angus Tait

V60 Men

- Ken Rawlinson
- James Wilkinson

V65 Men

- Joe Garbarino
- Mike Sanderson

Fell Runner of the Year

Keith Cooper

Those who completed 4 qualifying races, thus being eligible for winners' tankards, are shown in italics. The detailed results have been circulated on the e-group, and are also available from the secretary on request.

NFR JUNIOR SECTION

To all those budding Jos Naylor and/or Helene Diamantides, we'd love to see you all out there representing the club.

Over the last few years my boys have taken part in several fell races and have had a wail of a time doing so. Despite falling in nettles, being knee high in various boggy concoctions and competing against rather well drilled and larger peers, they have always returned to the finish line with a smile. This year they would like to feel part of a club.

Hence, we would like to contemplate the formation of an **informal** junior section.

So what would this mean? Simply, it would be encouraging our offspring gently onto the fells by means of attending Junior events and having the race reports published in the Newsletter. We envisage meeting on the fells so that we can run together and make like minded friends. However, parents will have to attend and take full responsibility for their own kids. That is why we will be limiting the Junior section to the children of Adult members of NFR.

Membership will be free for under 16's.

For those who are keen please post an email message via the e-group for my attention or ring on 01434 672095 so we have some idea of the numbers and can determine whether this is feasible.

E-MAIL

NFR operates a very successful e-group. This keeps members informed of club news and events. It is also much cheaper and easier than having to post out information eg the AGM minutes that accompany this newsletter.

Until recently, John & Kath Dallinson administered the e-group and we are grateful for all their hard work. Responsibility for the e-group has now been assumed by Colin Blackburn.

So if you are on e-mail but are not a member of the e-group, please consider joining by sending an e-mail to Colin whose e-mail address is:

colin.blackburn@durham.ac.uk

CARNETHY 5

3 NFR runners ventured north for this race. Geoff and Susan Davis reported that it was run in difficult conditions with ice underfoot and frozen paths. This did not deter Will Horsley who put in an excellent performance finishing 26th overall.

PHOTOS

Many thanks to Derek Parker (North York Moors AC) for his permission to use the photos of NFR runners at Clay Bank East. More photos are available at:
www.nym.ac

Below: Aengus McCullough digs in at Clay Bank East.



NFR

The newsletter of Northumberland Fell Runners

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CAPTAIN COOK'S RACE - NEW YEAR'S DAY

I was very surprised at just how popular a New Year's Day race could be. Over 200 runners, not all fell runners by nature I suspect, had descended upon the small village of Great Ayton, nestled under the shadows of the rising hulk of clay that is the northern edge of the North Yorkshire Moors. The race is so called because Great Ayton, along with a few places in the locality, claims to be the birth place of Captain James Cook; at least it has managed to bag itself the museum. Also, the highest point of the race is the Captain Cook's monument at about 320 metres.

The jovial manner of Dave Parry set everyone at ease at the start which, thankfully with so many competitors, was a nice wide piece of tarmac, thus providing ample distance for the runners to spread out before hitting the tricky single-track and the sticky mud. With a significant section of flat tarmac at the start the early pace was very fast, but as soon as we hit the first bit of mud things settled down into the usual rhythm.

The first proper climb rose quite steeply and I can imagine it would have come as quite a shock to those unfamiliar with the route and unfamiliar with fell races. At this point I had a feeling I was in the top 10% of the field and very grateful for that I was too, as I really would not relish the thought of running up there after the other 150+ had churned up the ground. The number of fallen trees and other obstacles actually made me wonder if the route should have been altered a little bit for safety reasons as there are easier, although less direct, ways up to the monument. Emerging from the conifers I was greeted with quite an eerie mist around the monument, which once reached resulted in an about turn along a well constructed "tourist" path.

I try not to look behind when racing because otherwise I may put unnecessary pressure on myself, but the route made a backward glance unavoidable, however I was relieved to see that I actually had a decent gap between me and the next man. Now my problem was ensuring I didn't lose the guys in front because I was now counting on them to show me the way: down the big stone slabs of the Cleveland Way, across a little bit of peaty bog and a sharp turn through some very muddy fields. The next section was again a good bit of tarmac, the sort of surface where I usually lose a few places, but on this occasion I more than held my own and cemented my place in this little chasing pack of four, all from different clubs. A sharp turn and a little section of steep tarmac before a crossing a very soggy field, saw me slip to the back of this pack and I thought that perhaps I had done too much too soon again. Crossing the field, I made another rearward glance

and was relieved to see no-one close behind.

I settled down knowing that the finish must be near, and content with finishing somewhere, I guessed, in the top twenty. We made another sharp turn and down through some more muddy footpaths for what seemed like forever. I could now see some runners behind me and I was sure the towering figure of Aengus McCulloch was there with his purple and green vest: he was. I knew the finish was near and I would have been disappointed to lose any places when this close. I dug in with what I thought was a mile to go but then suddenly at the end of a gravelly track and through some rather impressive big stone gates I recognised the finish line in the centre of the village.

I got up on my toes and made a big sprint for the line, but alas I had allowed that little group of runners a bit too much space and I could not quite catch them. As a bonus I did overtake someone along the way, I can only assume he was injured as he had set off in the leading pack with our Charlie and Dark Peak's Joe Blackett. Imagine my surprise when I learnt that I had surpassed all my expectations and finished 7th! Charlie was second behind some freak of nature from Birmingham who had a 3 minute lead at the finish line (3 minutes over that distance!). With Aengus in 9th and John Metson not too far behind NFR should have got the men's team prize, but Aengus was listed under the wrong club name.

To sum this race up, I would say that as fell races go it is not very "hardcore", but maybe that's what you want on New Year's Day. There was not much climb, the off road sections were generally big, easy tracks and about a quarter to a third of it was on tarmac. But the finish is grand through the arched gate in the centre of the village, and I've never seen so many people at the finish line of a fell race before. I felt like a superstar (for a moment).

Will Horsley

Will at Clay Bank
East Race



CLAY BANK EAST - 8 JANUARY 2006

Due to Aengus' anxious race preparations we actually arrived at this race 30 minutes before the start, which is very early for me. Still, it gave us the chance to check out the opposition and we noticed that there was no Joe Blackett, Paul Lowe, Ken Maynard or NFRs Charlie Stead. In fact, numbers seemed to be a little bit on the low side for one of these North Yorkshire races. It was very cold initially and there was even a little bit of ice on the ground at the registration point.

The start was a short walk from the car park on quite a steep hill heading up to Urra Moor. The first, and only significant, climb of this route was up the Carr Ridge path, which is a well constructed "tourist" path. Once the climb was over we quickly headed off to the right across some proper peaty moor-land. The paths were well used which probably made them a bit more difficult to run across.

KEEPING UP WITH NICK - A MISTAKE

Young Nick Swinburn didn't seem to be having any problems though, already with a decent lead over Aengus and only about a mile into the race. I could see Aengus trying to keep up with Nick, a mistake I have made a couple of times myself, and so I settled in behind a local runner content in knowing that I should be able to hold onto a top 5 finish.

I was reluctant to break away because I knew that neither I, Aengus or Nick knew the way, and so would be relying on marshals and tape for the route - not a very clever strategy for a fell race. However, I figured that even if I did get lost I could probably still make it back onto the course ahead of this guy, and so off I went in pursuit of Aengus.

TOUGH GOING

The going across the moor was very tough and one big stumble resulting in a slight hamstring twitch kept my pace in check. Eventually I caught up with Aengus and after running with him for a few paces decided to push on as I was sure I could see the silhouette of DFR's Paul Kelly running strongly behind me (I could). We were now on a fast gravel track across the moor which had a slight but achingly long incline to a trig point on top of Round Hill. This marks the pinnacle of the race and after retracing your steps for a hundred yards, you bear right again for the start of the descent home.

This gave me the opportunity to see how close the field was behind, and despite what I felt was a big effort up to that point I had not managed to establish a "safe" margin between me and the chasing pack. I also knew from last week that Aengus is a fast finisher and I was keen to put some distance between us before I finally succumbed to the mud of the home straight. I had to pause on a couple of occasions as the tape had been tied to what could

easily be misconstrued as a path junction and I wondered if the tape meant "you're on the right track" or "turn here". Fortunately I had opted for contact lenses that morning (I usually don't bother with any optics at all) and on the two or three occasions that this happened I was just able to make out some tape further ahead that kept me on the right route. Looking out for Nick was not an option because he was well out of sight by this point and anyway he knew this route no better than me.

THE DESCENT

Soon the descent steepened and it felt good. I was convinced Aengus was just a few yards behind me and didn't dare look back until we hit the slow flat muddy track leading to the finish. Even though I couldn't see him, the path meandered and I had visions of him bounding into sight at any point, so I dug in and didn't let my pace drop at all. This path seemed to go on for a long time and involved a few detours around and over fallen trees. The very final section was steep and fast, I imagine it would be a great spectacle to see a close finish in this race.

Well, there was no sort of close finish today: Nick had demolished the field and finished 2m 30s ahead of me, Aengus came in soon after, and NFR had completed an authoritative 1-2-3 on someone else's patch! With Paul Hainsworth we just nicked the men's team prize from North York Moors AC too.

The field was spread out and runners were streaming in for quite some time. Everyone was smiling at the finish line. Hats off to Dave Parry for another good race in North Yorkshire. I would encourage all NFR members to do some of these races as Dave always has a generous prize list at the end. To sum this race up I would say that it is very good, being 100% off-road with excellent views, and has the potential for some dramatic finishes.

Will Horsley



Nick Swinburn leads the way

CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW OF NFR IN 2005

At the AGM in January our treasurer and membership secretary, David Armstrong, gave a very encouraging report in respect of the club's finances and membership numbers. The club has a very healthy bank balance and in 2005 we had a record number of paid up members, around 90, with 17 of those being new members. So as well as being solvent, the club is very buoyant and dynamic, in terms of its membership, with old and new members right across the age range from 17 to 70.

NEW CLUB OFFICERS

As well as all these new club members we also have some fresh faces as Club Officers. We have a new club secretary in the slender shape of John Duff with Louise Wilkinson, the former incumbent, taking over from Stewart Gardner and Charlotte Roberts as social secretary. Karen Robertson is our new kit co-ordinator, Colin Blackburn has taken over the e-group, and I have joined Jane Grundy for the simple straightforward task of selecting the 2006 championship races.

All this means we have some outgoing officers to thank including that great stalwart of the club Kath Dallinson. Kath has been sending the kit out to all those new members for a couple of years now and her other half John has administered the e-group since its inception – so thanks to them. Thanks are also due to Stewart & Charlotte for, among other things, organising the '04 and '05 annual dinners; to Louise for her two years as secretary; and to Morgan for his part in selecting last year's championship races.

For most running clubs in 2006 the internet and e-mail are essential means of communication, not least in recruiting new members, and NFR is no exception. In fact for us, without a club night or a club base, it's even more essential. So further thanks are due to Paul Jameson for maintaining the NFR website, to John & Kath for keeping the e-group working and to all of you for using the e-group and keeping the club buzzing – please continue to do so. But not everybody is on e-mail, so we've kept up our newsletter, which is sent out to everybody, and very well put together, by John Duff who I know is always on the look out for new contributors.

LAKE DISTRICT WEEKENDS

On the social side NFR had three very enjoyable weekend trips to the Lake District in 2005. One to Wasdale and two to Buttermere. These weekends gave all those who went an insight into the musical talents of one or two of our members and also provided an insight into the musical limitations of the rest of us. But, as well as putting a sizeable dent into the beer stocks of these hostels and eating everything on offer, we also had some very enjoyable and challenging days on the fells. These weekends

are something we aim to continue in 2006 – our first being at the Helvellyn Hostel on the weekend of 11-12th March plus two more around the championship at Fairfield in May and the Screes in October.

2005 CHAMPIONSHIP

Our 2005 championship included some very challenging races and had the wider aim of broadening some of your horizons. Some of you took up the challenge and some of you didn't, but we still had 51 members running at least one of the 7 races with an intrepid 12 people completing the required 4 races (a long, a short, a medium and an additional A class race). Personally I enjoyed all the championship races I ran in, particularly the Buttermere Sailbeck for seeing friends from other clubs, the Beacon Hill for seeing lots of friends from this club and the Allendale challenge for seeing not very much at all in the pea souper across the Killhope Law hags! But still, there were some great races and, as ever, some close competitions. (Results of the series are shown elsewhere in this newsletter).

NATIONAL U18 CHAMPION

The most notable achievement by any individual in the club during 2005 was by Nick Swinburn. Nick is our first ever fell running national champion in any age group. In 2005 he became the FRA under 18 championship series winner and also became British and Irish champion by winning a one off race at Carlingford in Ireland. In addition, he has taken the local scene by storm, winning outright at Beacon Hill, Clay Bank East, Simonside Cairns, Bellingham Show, Saltwell Harriers Fell Race, Roseberry Topping and Brough Law. We are very pleased to have Nick as a member and hope that his success and enthusiasm for the fells continues for many years to come.

As well as Nick we had a number of other race winners in 2005 including Morgan who won at Allendale, Charlie Stead who won at Guisborough Woods and a well deserved first win for Dave Atkinson at the Chevy Chase. For the women Karen continued her many triumphs from previous years with wins at the Hexham Hobble and Bellingham Show, Louise Wilkinson had a fantastic win at the Chevy and also at the Falston Falcon, and Susan was the only woman who braved the Kielder Borderer this year and came away with numerous trophies as a result.

MOUNTAIN MARATHONS

NFR members have traditionally performed well in the major Mountain Marathons and 2005 was no exception. Steve and Morgan once again triumphed in the Karrimor elite race in which three other NFR members took part. They also took the Lowe Alpine MM elite title and were joined by five other NFR members in that race, including Jane & Lewis Grundy who were the first mixed team to finish. Not being content with two titles, Morgan and Steve took a third elite title at the Mourne Mountain Marathon in

from Geoff Davis

Northern Ireland – an incredible treble that to my knowledge no one else has done before. Well done to Steve and Morgan and to all our other members who took part in Mountain Marathons in 2005

NORTH EAST CHAMPIONSHIP

As well as our own competition many of you competed in the 2005 North East Fell Running Championships, with Will Horsley finishing 5th in the open competition, Pat Cooper winning the Lady Vet 50 category, Kath Dallinson the lady v60 and Ken Rawlinson the male v60 – very well done to them.

We had some great team performances in 2005. Not least when Mike Jeffrey, Dexter & Dave Atkinson came very close to winning the mega long & rocky Ennerdale fell race team prize, only to be pipped by one of the home clubs Borrowdale. But it was in the national relay races where we really shone and proved what the club is capable of on the big stage. Finishing 15th at the Hodgson and 16th at the FRA championship were fantastic achievements, and a great improvement on previous years. We even managed to put out a second team at Alva thanks to a last minute rescue act by Lucy Donnelly, Jane Walker and a new member Paul Reimer. Well done to you all and thanks in particular to Dave Atkinson for organising the relays this year – you did a grand job.

BOB GRAHAM ROUND

Many of you will know that the Bob Graham Round is very close to my heart and I was delighted with NFR's performance this year. Not only did we equal our best year in terms of numbers of completed rounds but our mountain marathon kings managed to complete two of the fastest rounds for many years, with both of them getting round in not much over 17 hours which is an absolutely incredible time. Mike Jeffrey, although still very fast, achieved something closer to mere mortal standards, when in July he breezed around in something around 22 hours. As a result of last year's achievements and those of the few years previous, NFR practically takes over the bi-annual Bob Graham Club Dinner and long may that continue. I look forward to helping a few more members in their attempts this year.

RACE ORGANISERS

We are very lucky in this club to have so many members who are willing to put up with the hassle and the risk of organising a fell race. Without them fell running in Northumberland would be very much the poorer and I would like to extend a particular thanks to them this year as pressures on organisers are growing and growing. As well as veteran organisers such as Ray Hayes and Keith Cooper we've got new people having a go, like Glen McWilliams, who I know is full of ideas for new races. Thanks very much to all our race organisers.

On the domestic front although we had no weddings this year that I know of, we did have two more NFR babies. Morgan and Lucy have been blessed with a daughter Morag, and Steve and Emma have a second son called Matthew who they tell me was 15 days over due, so I'm not sure who he takes after. But many congratulations from everyone at NFR.

So in conclusion, and at the start of another new fell running year, I think we have an even healthier and buoyant club than we've had in the past, if that's possible, which is friendly and inclusive, will continue to dominate the local fell running scene and, if we build on this year's achievements, can make an even bigger impact on the wider national competitions.

ASK UNCLE SIMON

The editor is delighted to report that Uncle Simon Side is back to answer all your fellrunning queries and problems. Once again, the editor's postbag has been overflowing. Over to you Uncle Simon...

Dear Uncle Simon,

I am getting very excited about the 2012 London Olympics. The whole country is looking forward with eager anticipation to this great event. The track and field events always play a central part in The Games and like the rest of the country I am keen to be involved. Do you think there will be a role for NFR in 2012?

Yours athletically, Olympic wannabee

Uncle Simon replies,

Sadly fell running is not recognised as an Olympic event and there are no signs that the athletic powers-that-be are likely to include it in 2012. Uncle Simon finds this strange, especially when 'athletic' events like synchronising swimming are included. However there is a ray of hope. Uncle Simon has heard on the grapevine that a new event is mooted for 2012 and for which NFR would seem to be eminently qualified.

This event demands rigorous training, years of self-sacrifice, and dedicated team working. It is not for the faint-hearted. Mere mortals have been known to flinch at the thought of it. All team members will have to be well and truly on their mettle.

So if you have been known to work up a thirst at a fellrace, have a word with your committee who are seeking volunteers for...The NFR Formation Beverage Team.

The choice of beverage is entirely up to the participant: sports drinks; lemonade; or, if the weather has been really hot, possibly even a glass of beer.

NFR Member becomes Fell Running Pin-up

It's true, one of NFR's male runners has become a poster pin-up after appearing in an advert for Inov8 trainers. We caught up with the mystery "model" to ask him how he became involved in the glamorous, if somewhat specialised, world of fell running modelling.

"I got a call from my agent back in June last year telling me that he had got me a job with Inov8; their original models had not been up to it as they weren't proper fell runners, and, you know, you just can't fake this kind of thing can you? Well, I was going through a bit of a quiet patch with work at the time and the fee, a free pair of trainers, was too good an offer to turn down. After a few cancellations we eventually made it up to the Simonside hills on an overcast July evening. They also had a female model from the club too.

After a bit of make-up, which basically involves mixing mud with Evian and rubbing it on yourself to look authentic, 'cos all fell runners have mud on their faces, right?, we traipsed up the hill and did some running around while the geezer and his assistants took some photos.

It took forever, 'cos this photographer was really fussy and each shot had to be re-done about seven or eight times. By the time we had finished it was so dark he even had his assistants standing with flash bulbs, we must have looked a right sight on the hills that night.

Anyhow, the shot they used in the end is kinda weird as they had me jumping as high as I could off a boulder and back down on to the path. It's probably not the sort of manoeuvre you would see in a race or anything, but it does look kinda dramatic."

I think our members would agree! Check out the finished article at:

www.inov-8.com/Product.html

"I'm a bit disappointed that my mug isn't visible in the final version, but I guess us fell runners aren't really renowned for our good looks, are we?"

There is a prize if you can work out which NFR member the mystery model is.

Annual Dinner – many thanks to Jane Grundy who organised an excellent evening at the Imperial Hotel, Jesmond. The food was good, the company convivial, and there was even a chance for the NFR disco divas to show their prowess on the dance floor.

More social events are planned for this year, including the Geoff Davis 'specials' in the Lake District.

2006 SUBSCRIPTIONS

The annual subscriptions for the 2006 calendar year are now due. Subs have once more been maintained at £10, with an additional £2 voluntary NoEAA levy for any members that wish to pay it. Please note that any member that is already a member of another affiliated running club will almost certainly be paying their NoEAA levy as part of their subscription to the other club, and no benefit will be gained for paying it again through NFR.

A membership renewal form is attached to this newsletter. Please would you complete a form as that helps me ensure that I have up to date addresses, phone numbers and email addresses for everyone.

Please note that cheques should be made payable to "Northumberland Fell Runners", as occasionally kind and generous members make cheques payable to me personally. Grateful as I am for this, it just means that I then have to write a personal cheque and visit two completely different banks to make two separate deposits.

Could I also remind everyone that we continue to have stocks of Club vests and purple shorts? Why not treat yourself to new gear to really "cut a dash" on the fells in 2006! I have it on good authority that the current stocks have been manufactured using a new hi-tech material known as Go-fast, which is almost guaranteed to improve times by 5% in muddy conditions and 10% in the dry. In cold weather you could even wear two vests and really go for a PB.

Prices for these unique, wholly legal, performance-enhancing products remain at a very competitive £15 for vests and £14 for shorts, and are only available directly through the Club.

Kit orders can be placed using the membership renewal form, or if you are really efficient and have already paid, by contacting our new kit co-ordinator Karen Robertson, whose details are given elsewhere in this newsletter. But if ordering directly with Karen, please remember that you still have to send your money to me!

Happy running to you all.

David Armstrong

BOB GRAHAM ATTEMPT

Jeff Ross is planning an attempt on the Bob Graham Round later this year. Jeff is on the lookout for pacers and support. BGRs are always good days out in the Lakes. So if you fancy assisting, have a word with Jeff when you next see him.

ALWINTON SHOW RACE - 8 October 2005: 3 miles, 700 feet

For some strange reason, I have always had an odd curiosity about Alwinton Show. It goes back 25 years or so, when the lads from Newbrough organised an annual bus trip to it. If my memory serves me correctly, I think that trip was more geared towards the Beer Tent than the Fell Race, but perhaps I'm being unfair!

In those days I didn't even know where Alwinton was. When I enquired, I was told to go to the "Back o' Beyond" and then turn left!

But it was enough for me often to wonder what it was that could tempt 30 or so (half) sensible adults to travel for an hour by bus to an agricultural show in such a remote spot in the middle of October.

I've been tempted several times to do the race, but so far without managing to. It always seems to clash with another, or proves one commitment too many amongst the October relays. One year I even rang the Rose and Thistle pub only to find it had been run the previous weekend! So I was very pleased to see the race in the Club Championship for 2005; finally the spur I needed to go to the show and explode the myth.

And I wasn't disappointed. What a hive of activity. A show definitely not in decline 25 years on.

The race is short. Short and fast actually. You can see the whole course from the start and so it's a spectators delight. The first mile or so is over flat fields by the river, then there is a short steep rise, across another field and then up the only real ascent. But it's a tough one. Especially after running far too fast across the fields. Not what you would call a runnable climb. At least not for me anyway. And not for anyone else around me either, I noticed. But Matt Whitfield and Morgan were already too far ahead to see. Perhaps they managed it.

At the summit you turn right across the ridge with a great view of the show field and at the end of the ridge turn right to descend, equivalent of what was climbed at the other end of the ridge. Over a field, jump the wall, over the road and across a rushes field to the finish. It's one of those "eyeballs out" races that allows no let up or rest from start to finish. Especially when it's the final Club Championship Race and I know that the outcome will depend upon this result! Quite simply, to win the V40's category I had to finish ahead of Mike Jeffrey. And Mike would no doubt have been equally aware of the importance!

As I expected, Mike opened a short lead over the fields. I then managed to close it and overtake him

on the ascent, but he pulled it back along the ridge, turned a couple of seconds ahead of me and increased it gradually on the descent to the finish, to beat me by around 10 seconds. Just too big a margin



close. But what a cracking race.

NECAA FELL RUNNING CHAMPIONSHIP

Keith Cooper has organised again the North East Counties Athletic Association Open Fell Running Championship. Full details of the championship are available on the NFR website. The races also feature in the FRA calendar.

There are 6 races with a competitor's best four results counting towards the championship. So come along and support this excellent series of local races. Pre-entry to the Lordstones and Chevy Chase races is advised.

- *Sunday 9 April*
Gisborough Moors Race (NYM)
- *Sunday 30th April*
Peel Fell Race (Kielder)
- *Sunday 21st May*
Lordstones Wainstones (NYM)
- *Sunday 1st July*
Chevy Chase (Cheviot Hills)
- *Sunday 3 September*
Cocke Howe and Beyond (NYM)
- *Sunday 3 December*
Hexhamshire Hobble (N Pennines)

OPEN5

Two members of NFR, John Allen and Louise Wilkinson, competed very successfully in the open5 series last year, winning the mixed pair class. Louise took time out from her busy training schedule to answer your roving reporter's questions.

What is open5?

open5 is organised by James and Lisa Thurlow of Open Adventure. The concept of open5 is that you have to visit as many controls within 5 hours, some only by foot and the others by mountain bike.

At registration you are given a preprinted map with the location of the checkpoints. The sting in the tail is that you don't get the values of the checkpoints until you have started the race, and before that you have to either opt to run first or ride. This event is suitable for all levels of abilities either as a pair, mixed pair or solo.

When and where were the races?

2005 saw the 1st running of this new series in the North of England. We travelled down to Reeth in the Yorkshire Dale in March. Here there was still a lot of snow lying behind the stone walls and the hill tops. In May it was the turn of Bowness. We had to get the ferry to the start for this race. In October it was Blanchland, one we wanted to win as it was on home territory. Finally it was a very wet day in December at Rydal Hall, covering Little Langdale and Loughrigg Fell.

What did you enjoy about them?

I love the event as it combines two of my favorite sports, fell running and mountain biking. I had done a few Trail Quests in the past so thought it was a good challenge. I also like the decisions you have to make eg should you bike first or run, how long should you spend on each activity, and is it worth going for a checkpoint. It's all a bit of a gamble; sometimes it pays off. Also the organisers try and cater for everyone. There has been some brilliant downhill biking and scenery.

Which race did you have the best result at?

Our best result came at Blanchland. Up until then we had some very close results. At Reeth we were joint 1st but it came down to time so were awarded 2nd. Then at Bowness we were 3rd with only 10 points separating 3rd from 1st. We were due a win. Everything clicked at Blanchland: we had no pressure and just enjoyed the race. We also, out of all the pairs and solo's competing, came 3rd overall which is quite an achievement. We also won the Open5 series in the mixed pair.

Have your map reading skills improved?

I think each race this year has helped with my navigation. It's coming on alright but I still have a long way to go to be as good as John. He has his own

sat nav system: the unique J5 system. It runs on Finger of Fudge and High 5, maybe the odd beer!

Will you be doing the series this year?

I hope to compete in the series this year, all being well.

Who is fitter - you or John?

Fitness is a factor but a good team is also a team that works well together. We both have our strengths and share responsibility between us. If someone is struggling you help and vice versa: that's what makes you a strong pair.

For more information on open5 races for this year go to www.openadventure.com or telephone 0845 056

ASK UNCLE SIMON (AGAIN)

Dear Uncle Simon,

After a hard day's fellrunning, I always intend to rehydrate with a relaxing cup of tea and a piece of cake in the nearest teashop. However before I know it, I am gripped by a giant hand which drags me into the nearest licensed premise. There it forces me to drink several glasses of the landlord's finest ale. Is this a common occurrence?

Yours guiltily, A leTaster

Uncle Simon replies,

Yes. This phenomenon is particularly known to occur on NFR Lake District weekends. Scientists have been studying the problem for years. There is no known cure.

Dear Uncle Simon,

Am I alone in detecting a certain theme running through your readers' letters? Is it just me, or do they all involve imbibing sinful beer which, as all good Members of the Temperance Society know from their reading of the Good Book, 'stingeth like a serpent and biteth like a ruddy adder'.

Yours in abstention, Mr T Total

Uncle Simon replies,

Urgent - please let me know where they sell this beer that stingeth and biteth as you so vividly describe. I have been looking for it all my life.

Editor's Note

Many thanks to everyone who has written articles. David Armstrong has come up trumps as usual, but now has a rival in Will Horsley who has been keen to put pen to paper. Geoff Davis has also included his chairman's update which was presented at the annual dinner.