



The newsletter of Northumberland Fell Runners

Autumn 2007

Welcome to the autumn edition of NFR. Astute readers will notice that one man has again excelled himself in putting pen to paper: step forward David Armstrong. So many thanks to David for all his hard work.

Many others do contribute to the NFR news network via the e-group and our excellent website hosted by Rob Stephens. Indeed the latter has proved to be such a success that it has overtaken the newsletter as the point of call for up to the minute news. Most of our members have internet access and can read the website. Thus we are considering suspending the newsletter for the time being and simply using the website. No final decision has been taken on this, so if you have any feedback please relay it to the editor. And talking of relays, this newsletter has an account of the best ever finish for NFR in the Ian Hodgson Relay. So take a breather from your training and read on.



KENTMERE 2007

10 years ago NFR was born. The purple and green vests made their first appearance at the Kentmere Horseshoe. The NFR championship returned to Kentmere this year, and there was a good contingent at the race.

Pictured from left to right are:

Back row—Louise Wilkinson, Peter Reed, Garry Owens, John Duff, Paul Appleby, David Armstrong

Front row—Richard Cavner, Peter Moralee, Will Horsley



KENTMERE 1997

Pictured on the photo are (from left to right):
Richard Cavner
David Bell
Peter Reed
James Tomlin
Garry Owens
Ray Hayes

Photo courtesy of Peter Reid.

Roman Wall Show Race – 4.6 miles, 620ft

I last recall being at the Roman Wall show as a 15 year old, which is about well... erm.... let's just say a few years ago. I don't recall a fell race then, but, if I'm honest, I was probably more interested in whether I could sneak into the beer tent!

An annual race was historically held, because I've since heard that Barry Jameson used to commonly win it ... and it's sickening for the rest of us that he's still good enough to win it now! But there has been an absence of around 25 years or so, and as a local, it is nice to see it return.

The Show is held in the field next to Steel Rigg car park and has a long local tradition of being a cold, wet day. But thankfully not this year. The re-introduction of the Fell Race was greeted with a lovely warm summer day – almost too warm in fact, but thankfully the sun didn't fully break through until the race was just about over.

The race clashed with the Blaydon Race and the Alwinton Fell Race; Beacon Hill was less than two days earlier and the Bowderdale Wild Race was the following day. But there were still a total of 37 entries, and of a surprisingly high standard. It was well supported by Tyndale Harriers, who were the organising Club, and several unattached runners. NFR had five runners in the field: Steve Birkinshaw, Dave Coxon, Karen Robertson Pam Armstrong and me.



Dave Coxon in full flow

The route started in the show field, headed downhill to the foot of Steel Rigg Crag, crossed the Wall and continued east along an undulating track to the south of the crag towards Hotbank. It re-joined the main Wall track for the main climb past Hotbank Farm and continued along it until the Pennine Way stile, at which point it headed due north to a checkpoint at an old stone lime-kiln, where it then turned west along tracks parallel to the main crag back to the show field.

Unusually the race was a dead heat. It was led from around 300 yards out by Mike Openshaw who, I was told, is a former national cross country champion and sub-4 minute miler, but his training partner Steven Armstrong was never far behind and the two of them crossed the finish line together in 29.04. They were too far ahead of me to see, but reports from those at the finish were that it appeared to be a friendly, rather than

hotly contested, tie.



Pam heading for LV50 victory

Tyndale Harriers launched a major assault on the prizes with Tim Griffiths 1st V40, Tim Wylie 1st V45 (and 1st veteran overall), Neil Cassidy 1st V50, Doug Maxwell 1st V60 and Rachel Vincent 1st Lady, Rhiannon Robinson 1st LV40 and Joy Ryall 1st LV45. NFR didn't leave entirely empty handed with Karen taking 1st LV35 and Pam Armstrong 1st LV50, in her first outing in that category. Steve ran well to finish 4th behind Tim Wylie of Tyndale, in what is a much shorter race than he would normally run. I managed 7th place and Dave finished 21st.

Pam's £10 prize comfortably covered the tea, cake and ice creams as we sat basking in glorious sunshine amongst the sheep droppings. Bliss!

There were many positive comments following the race and so it's very likely that it will continue. I suspect the positive feedback, and no clash with the Blaydon Race, will make it even more popular next year. Well worth a trip out to a lovely location.

David Armstrong

NFR E-GROUP

Many of our members keep in contact via the e-group. This is a simple system whereby you can contact everyone else in NFR by sending an e-mail via the yahoo e-group. If you are on e-mail but are not on the e-group, then please contact Colin Blackburn who can set up an account for you.

Colin can be contacted on:

colin.blackburn@durham.ac.uk

A few helpful points on the e-group are:

- To send an e-mail, address it to NorthumberlandFR@yahoogroups.com
- When you reply to an e-mail, it automatically goes to the whole group, not just the person who sent the e-mail.
- If you are not receiving some of the e-mails, check that they are not going into your spam filter

Ben Lomond Hill Race (9 miles; 3,192 feet) 12 May 2007

I've now done the Ben Nevis race 12 times. On most of my travels to Fort William, whilst driving up the bonny banks of Loch Lomond I have bored anyone who cared to listen with my predictable

"That's Ben Lomond over there. I've never been up it and have always fancied doing the Ben Lomond race. One day I'm going to do it."

"Yeah, yeah, heard it all before...."

So after 12 years here I am finally at Rowardennan, halfway up the eastern shore of Loch Lomond. Ben Lomond advertises itself as "The most accessible of Scotland's Munros", and I suspect it's true. The car park was directly adjacent to the access path, which takes you straight onto the hill.

Rowardennan is on the West Highland Way and is little more than a Hotel where the race starts and finishes. The race itself is hard to gain entry to. Last year it was a Scottish Championship race and had a limit of only 100. A bit of a contrast to Fairfield, which is approaching as I write this, and which has a limit of 600! After much grumbling last year the limit this year was increased to 150 and the entry list was quickly filled.

My hopes of a glorious spring day with panoramic views of the Loch and surrounding Western Highlands proved slightly on the optimistic side. It was a day best described in traditional Scottish terms as "dreich". This is loosely translated into English as "pretty bloody miserable" and the sort of warm, damp conditions that the Scottish midges just love.



We set off in rain, along the road for 250 yards or so from the hotel and turned up the path. Jon Broxap described it to me before the start as "A bit like Skiddaw" and I could see the comparison. A good path throughout, starting up a manageable climb through the woods then onto the open fell. As an "out and back" race with 3,192 feet of ascent in 9 miles, that means you're actually doing the ascent in only 4½ miles as the return half is all descent. So at an average of around 800 feet of ascent per mile you can imagine that it's a pretty consistent climb. It largely follows the main tourist path, other than two flagged off-path sections to by-pass particularly eroded areas.

To any decent "climber" only the flagged sections over rough terrain would be described as not runnable. Although for me, only 6 days after 2 hrs 53 minutes of the Kielder Borderer, I have to admit to putting in a few additional walking sections!



The descent is great, but quite technical. The path is rather eroded and so is very rocky, providing constant tripping hazards that necessitate a definite element of caution. One fellow competitor passed me at great speed only to trip and roll down the rocky path. He quickly got up and carried on only to trip again within 5 steps. That slowed him down a bit! After checking he was OK I pushed on, but admirably, he came back at me and passed me yet again. As he did so he stubbed his toe on yet another rock and was perilously close to going down for a third time. He disappeared into the mist with blood running down both shins. That was the bravest piece of downhill running I've seen for a while. Seeing him fall so heavily twice, and almost a third time, certainly slowed me up a bit! More than it slowed him it would seem. Perhaps I'm just going soft.

I finished in 1hr 26mins 45secs in 35th position out of 118 finishers. This was a few minutes slower than I'd hoped, but after 3½ hours in a car, 6 days after the Kielder Borderer, the most severe ascent I'd done for around 8 months and in a field of runners from largely Scottish mountain clubs such as Westerlands, Arran, Lochaber, Lomond and Carnethy, I can't be too disappointed. It's one more "must do" fell race ticked off the list. But what will I say as I travel up the banks of Loch Lomond to Ben Nevis this year?

David Armstrong

CASTLES AND ISLANDS CHALLENGE 2007

The longest day; 21st June 2007. "And it might just turn out to be" I thought, recalling my experiences of other similar events, as we headed for Coquet Yacht Club at Amble for the pre-race briefing.

This is a relatively new event, only run once before I believe, involving sailing and running up the East coast of Northumberland and visiting the main Castles of the area en-route. Total sailing is around 55 miles with running divided into 4 separate runs totalling 30 miles. Target overall time to complete: 24 hours.

My original running partner had injured his knee with only 36 hours to go and so our team entry looked doomed. A bit of a head-scratcher with so little remaining time. Just how do you find a replacement who is fit enough ... has all the necessary kit ... can be in Amble just over a day later ... and is mad enough to agree to such a challenge with no time to prepare or plan? You ring David Atkinson of course! And sure enough, "fresh" from his 7-day non-stop World Adventure Race, and two legs of support to Geoff Davis on his 50 @ 50 all in the previous three weeks, Dave immediately agreed with his usual enthusiasm.

There were 11 boats entered this year, and NFR were well represented. Dave & I were teamed up with Matt Simms as skipper of his own boat "Odin", and Paul Hainsworth & John Duff and Chris Little & Katherine Davis were teamed up as runners on other boats. Katherine was a veteran of last year's race but was giving nothing away to her fellow club member competitors!



Skipper Matt aboard "Odin"

The runs give the race its "Castles" theme. The first run commenced at 7.30pm at the front gates of Alnwick Castle and headed for Amble marina via Warkworth Castle. The route followed the main road out of Alnwick for about 1½ mile, and then an enjoyable series of paths, tracks and minor roads took us southeast towards Warkworth. A circuit of the Castle was compulsory and then we continued along the road for the re-

maining mile or so to the Marina. The total distance of this first run was given as 16k, or 9.9 miles. Unfortunately we slightly misunderstood the Warkworth Castle requirement, and effectively completed 1¼ circuits, costing us a place, but we still finished the run in 1 hr 3 mins 31 secs in 3rd position.

A pleasant warm summer evening was replaced by a sea fret as we reached Warkworth and this thickened as we approached the coast. So much for our hopes of a lovely sunset and sunrise over the Northumberland coastline. It was chilly and quite bleak as we joined the boat. Matt and Andrew, our 4th team member, organised an effective pick up and it appeared as though we left the harbour first, as we couldn't see any other boats ahead.

The sailing requirements give the race its "Islands" part of the challenge. The boats must circumnavigate Coquet Island in a clockwise direction before heading north, and during the sail to and from the most northerly point, Holy Island, must visit the Farne Islands twice, once by sailing through Inner Sound and once by sailing through Staple Sound.

It was rather eerie, as we set off for Coquet Island in the mist, unable to see more than 40 or 50 yards around us to pick out buoys, other boats or the Island. Dave and I quietly hoped that our sailors had it all in hand as we cleaned ourselves up with our baby wipes and got a brew going.



Dave looking as fresh as ever

Matt had decided that the tide was favourable and so our tactics should be to head north straight to Holy Island whilst conditions allowed reasonable progress. This also meant that we would get most of night before our next run at Holy Island, which was the second longest, and would leave the two shorter runs for when we headed back south during Saturday. That suited us, as it allowed the greatest rest time after the longest run and meant that we would then tackle the runs in the order of decreasing distance. It also meant that we had

by David Armstrong

a chance of some sleep.

After a meal of pasta and sauce we decided to try to sleep. It was about midnight. We both managed part-sleep and part-rest and were wakened at around 3.00am by Matt suggesting it was time to prepare for the next run, as we would probably be running in around 1½ hours.

As we arrived at Holy Island it was around 5.00am. There were no other boats and it was clear that we were first to arrive. This didn't necessarily mean that we were leading the race, as we didn't know whether others had sailed straight there as we had, or ticked off one of the shorter runs on the way. As it turned out, virtually all others had done the same as us and so we were actually in the lead.

We set off by dinghy to the jetty and commenced our run at around 5.15am. It is officially stated as 15k, being 9.3 miles, and we had decided upon a clockwise circuit. It was a very peaceful and pleasant early morning as we set off to the first checkpoint at the Coast-guard Lookout Station and then headed through the village out along the main causeway road until the track that took us to "The Snook" at the western tip of the Island.

After touching The Snook wall we initially then retraced our steps back along the track and road before heading out along the paths on the north side of the island to the next checkpoint, a white pyramid structure called Emmanuel Head at the northeast corner. The paths wound through the undulating coarse grass and sand dunes and it was necessary to run on a compass bearing for much of the way, as we couldn't see the shore or the village. The paths were covered by literally hundreds of enormous snails. This was not their best breakfasting decision on a morning when 22 runners were likely to be passing through whilst looking at compasses. We did our best to watch our feet, but there were still a few inevitable casualties. Thankfully for the snails we found out later that some runners had taken alternative routes.

From Emmanuel Head we headed south along the track to Lindisfarne Castle, where we encountered another team commencing their anti-clockwise circuit, and then along the road back to the jetty. Our time was 1.01.50 (including an unscheduled comfort break!) We had retained our lead. It was not yet 6.30am and so we were considering an overall finish time of around 3.00pm might be possible.

We headed south for Seahouses, but had to sail wider through Staple Sound on the way. This gave the second placed boat a chance to catch us, as it had sailed Staple Sound on its way north, and so could sail through the more convenient Inner Sound on the way back. We had slipped into second place as we landed

at Seahouses. The route specifically prohibits the use of the road and so is along the beach to Bamburgh Castle and back, a total of around 11k, or 6.8 miles. As we were heading back along the beach we could see the runners from the boat ahead in front of us. We could see they were looking tired and we were able to steadily close the gap and overtake them about 2k from the finish. We were back in front, and sailed out of Seahouses with a lead of around 3 minutes.

We knew that the team in second place had tiring runners, and so we were confident that we could do a faster time than them in the final run from Low Newton to Dunstanburgh Castle and back. So all we had to do was stay ahead in the sailing. It sounds simple, but of course sailing involves many more variables than running, and just after lunchtime it all went pear-shaped. The winds dropped completely and we were becalmed a couple of miles north of Newton, with our immediate challengers close behind and the third place boat about 300 hundred yards behind that. All different tactics were used to try to gain tiny distances, but once the tide became unfavourable we were forced to drop anchor to avoid going backwards. By this time the boat immediately behind us had edged about 30 yards ahead.



Matt studies the sails for any hint of wind.

After a couple of hours of frustration the lead boat noticed that the third place boat had despatched its runners by dinghy and they were rowing towards Newton, with the boat following under its motor. They also then dispatched their own runners by dinghy too. We were not fully prepared for this turn of events and some debate ensued as to whether the rules permitted such tactics. We eventually decided that if we didn't also row, without a miraculous and sudden return of the winds, we would be out of the race. So we got changed into our running gear, inflated the dingy and set off to row what must have been at least a mile to shore. This indecision gave both other boats a lead of around 25 minutes on us and we soon realised that any chance of winning the event was fast disappearing.

Castles & Islands continued

The most appropriate landing point looked to be the beach at "Football Hole" near High Newton, and so we headed for that. No sooner had we set off than the heavens opened. It poured down and we were drenched in no time. After ½ a mile or so, we could barely see the coast or our boat, and as I rowed through the rain, both of us soaked to the skin and Dave sitting on the floor of a flooded boat, I could see over his shoulder that a seal was watching from about 30 yards behind us. Seeing its head peeping out of the water staring at us as if to say "What on earth are you two silly bu**ers doing?" was one of the classic moments of the race. We laughed out loud at the irony of it all.

After about 50 minutes rowing we dragged the boat up the beach and set off to run round the headland to Low Newton. The run starts and finishes at the ramp on to the beach at the end of the road and involves a 7k, or 4.2 miles, route along the beach to the gate of Dunstanburgh Castle and back. The runners from both other boats passed us returning to Newton as we headed towards Dunstanburgh, and we realised that they still had enough of a lead that we would struggle to catch them no matter how well we sailed. We completed the run in 36.37 mins and headed back to Football Hole for the dinghy. Fortunately Matt and Andrew had brought the boat inshore whilst we were running and the return row was only about 200 yards.

We set off back to Amble. By now it was about 4.30pm. The wind was still pretty elusive but there was just about enough to make slow progress. We could see the leading two boats in the distance but in the light winds it would have taken us at least half an hour to reach them even if they dropped anchor. Our chances of overall victory were long gone.

In sailing events, sailing times are adjusted by a standard mechanism that takes account of the size and type of the boat. The overall winner of the event cannot qualify for the separate sailing trophy and our adjusted sailing time won the Overall Fastest Sailing Cup. This was very satisfying for us all, but obviously more so for our sailors Matt and Andrew; all Dave and I contributed to that award was keeping them going with food and cups of tea! Still every little contribution makes a difference!

It gradually became apparent that eight boats overall had failed to complete the race for varying reasons. Most had completed the four runs but had then motored back to Amble in the acceptance that they were too far from the finish to be able to sail there in the designated time allowance. This allowance requires boats to cross the finish line by 8.30pm, 25 hours after the start, otherwise their runners cannot qualify for the running trophy. So ultimately only three boats managed to complete the full course in the allowed time under sail-power, and only one within the 24-hour target. And one of those finishers somewhat dubiously

bent the rules and motored for a couple of miles to keep up with their runners rowing the dinghy to Newton. In the rules, a sailing leg only ends when the runners pass through the checkpoint to commence their run. So they had used their motor to complete a sailing leg. Surely motor use should be restricted to only after the runners are ashore and have reached the checkpoint where the sailing leg ends and the running leg commences? Had that occurred, that boat may have been noticeably further away from Newton when their runners returned, and that may have meant they wouldn't have passed us.



The skipper accepts the Overall Fastest Sailing Time Trophy

This highlights that there were some quirks in the rules that a few of us felt could do with tightening or changing for future years if it is to become a serious and genuine competitive event. Further examples are the entitlement for a boat to have three runners instead of two if it wishes; meaning no runner need do more than two consecutive runs or more than three in total. When competing against other boats whose runners are running all four runs consecutively, it is hardly a level playing field.

And the event is for traditional mono-hull boats only. But this year a trimaran boat was allowed to take part as a non-participating "guest" to test the event for future years when they may introduce a multi-hull category. Yet, despite it not being officially eligible to enter, its runners could still compete for the "Best runners" trophy, which they duly won! All a bit bizarre really.

Nevertheless, the event is still somewhat in its infancy and such issues will no doubt evolve with experience. It didn't spoil what was an immensely enjoyable team challenge event; a great location, conveniently close and with superb wildlife to enjoy; long enough to be a genuine challenge, yet short enough to be manageable. We could see it growing each year to become a well-established event with many entrants. But if it is to become that, they do need to re-visit some of those rules!

An American wanders the fells

16th October, 2005. Lined up in my worn flat trainers, I set out on my first ever fell race: the FRA relays in Alva. Soon, I would walk more than I ever thought I would in a race, reach the tops of Ben Cleuch and Ben Ever, fill my shorts with heather on the slide down to Daigton Burn, and get passed in the home stretch by two wispy-haired gentlemen wearing what looked like tartan hot pants...I was hooked!

Coming to Newcastle with my family for a one-year academic sabbatical from the U.S. and knowing no one, I stumbled on the NFR website. It seemed the English way to join a club rather than race unaffiliated. And besides, I'd need some help just to find the small villages where these "fell" races started, so I joined up. It was thanks to the NFR that I first had occasion to tread inside an English pub, and I had many good conversations and experiences getting to know NFR folks - including riding up and down to Scotland with the relay teams.

Before the start of the Alva race the pre-race damping down of expectations had begun. "I haven't really been able to train since the daylight disappeared". "I've hardly run at all since the London Marathon"....This has a sort of ritual quality the world over, and I mentally dubbed this the pre-race *haka*. My natural gambit of "I've never run a fell race before" was quickly relegated to the back of the pack on the arrival of Lucy "I've just given birth" Donnelly, who handed the cute proof thereof to her husband and then took off uphill.

"Cross country" running is mostly a school sport in the United States. In the Midwest, my high school team raced in circles around public parks, or golf courses. Or (when it was their turn to host) around the grounds of the Indiana boys' state correctional institution. Attitudes about private property (see photo) abetted by untethered rural dogs make it a good deal harder to cross the actual midwestern countryside on foot.

Living at the edge of Newcastle, I was soon running on the many small bridlepaths and footpaths in the nearby countryside. But a month after we arrived, bulldozers starting clearing land nearby, and I resigned myself to losing access. A week later, it was a pleasant shock to find, just 50 metres over from the old one, a newly fenced footpath striking straight across the construction site. To my American sensibilities, that arrangement between private property and the public *wanderlust*, rendered visible in the many stiles, kissing gates, and bridleways dotting the countryside, was one of the most foreign things about living in England.

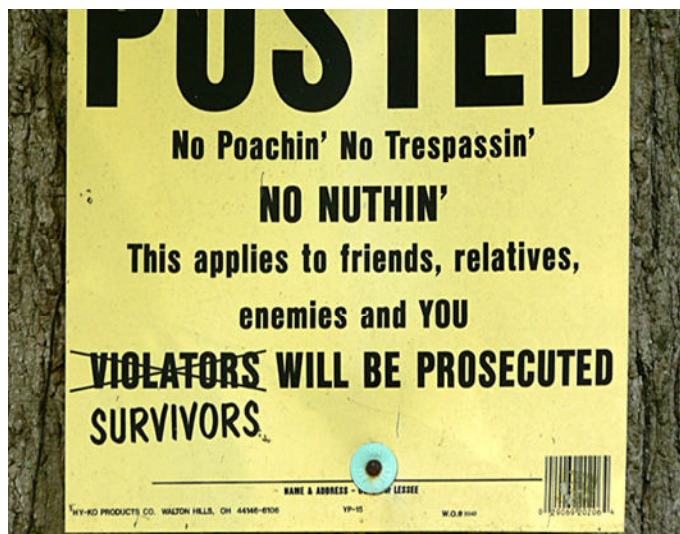
My fell racing successes might be charitably caricatured as "*Confucian*": I could usually be found respectfully following behind those who were my elders by a decade or more. But by December I had trained harder, increased my mileage, and was looking forward to the Simonside Cairns race. There was plenty of mud and

wind, but I ran all but two shortish sections. I managed to avoid falling on the distractingly beautiful panoramic descent into the Coquet Valley (unlike John D., whose need for stitches kept him out of the pub afterwards, but did not prevent him from finishing ahead of me...). And a cunning stratagem got me past those venerable V-50s Paul J. and Terry H. for the first (and last) time in the final yards of the race: I had bought my first-ever fellrunning shoes in the waning days of the race season, so surged past the duo finishing with footwear failure.

Is England a Shangri-la for runners? The weather that some call boring means that it's rarely too hot or too cold to run outside. In the Northeast, an hour or two of running is usually enough to reward yourself with a view from some local peak. I miss running with you folks who are still finding the way over and through all kinds of fences and walls.

Paul Meyer Reimer

Anti-stile: sign at the edge of a forest, Hocking Hills, Ohio, U.S.A.



NFR WEBSITE

The NFR website is functioning really well under Rob Stephens' stewardship. It features up to the minute news, race reports, and photos. So make sure you add the website to your list of favourites.

Rob is always happy to receive contributions for the website. It doesn't have to be reams and reams of beautifully crafted prose (though feel free to wax lyrical if you wish). A simple e-mail and brief race report is always of interest to our members.

The website address is:
www.northumberlandfellrunners.co.uk

You can e-mail Rob at:
patrob@btinternet.com

CHAMPIONSHIP PHOTOS



Steve Walker climbing at Great Whernside.



Steph Scott skips through the stones at Great Whernside.



Paul Hainsworth leads the chasing pack on the first hill at Sedbergh.



Susan Davis working hard at Great Whernside.



Gary Jones and Will Horsley blast off at The Forest Burn.



Bernard Kivlehan keeps smiling at Thropton.

Photos by:

Phil Vincent (Tynedale): Great Whernside

Pat Dunn: Forest Burn and Sedbergh

Rob Stephens: Thropton

Photos all taken from the NFR website where there are lots more.

Coniston Country Fair Fell Race *by David Armstrong*

Amongst a disappointingly wet and dreary summer this turned out to be a cracking day out. Descending skills were tested immediately on arrival, with a rather "interesting" zigzag descent down a wet field into the parking area. Just as well I had Walsh radials on the car! Several vehicles were slithering around all over the place, making the approach to the gate rather hairy.

The sun came out on a glorious Lakeland day. The Fair was impressively situated on the shore of the lake at Coniston Hall, just beyond the main Coniston Village. There were all of the traditional attractions, including a "Hodgson-like" tea tent - plus the added bonuses of a big yellow rescue helicopter for the kids to explore, and a fly past by the Red Arrows (which unfortunately the runners missed as it happened during the middle of the race!).

There were 81 runners. In common with most races from Coniston, the route went up the Old Man of Coniston. The start was in the show field, and after ½ mile it crossed the Coniston to Torver road, and then ascended the Old Man by a track up its southeast side. The first half of the ascent was runnable, but then steepened up a typically rough grassy Lakeland hillside with rocky outcrops. The running came to a bit of an abrupt halt at that point. But the descent was cracking, with a splendid view back over the show field and the lake.

There were 77 finishers. The winner was Peter Holworth of Horwich, with Colin Moses of Bingley taking 1st V40. Jackie Lee was 1st lady, breaking the women's record in the process, and Nicola Davies 1st LV40. I managed 9th overall in 61.46. And what a pleasure to run up and down the Old Man of Coniston without seeing a single slate mine!

A highly recommended day out. And if the kids don't fancy the helicopter, there are even junior races they can do instead.

Langdale Horseshoe *Old Cheviot reports*

There was a large field swelled by an NFR contingent at the Langdale Horseshoe. The sun shone, the early morning mist cleared, and the views were impressive.

After the initial scamper along the rocky path from The Old Dungeon Ghyll, there was a very warm climb up to Stickle Tarn and Thunacar Knott. A swift descent to the boggy Martcrag Moor led to a climb through the Rossett Pike crags and on to Esk Hause. The traverse under Esk Pike was very greasy, and the climb up Bowfell tiring.

Runners traversed around Crinkle Craggs with varying degrees of success (top tip: stay low by Three Tarns) and arrived at the summit from all angles. After The Bad Step was braved or bypassed, the running improved with a fast descent beyond the last crinkle. This left one last climb up Pike O'Blisco, before the final slippery descent to the cattle grid (passing en-route our in-house photographer Pat Dunn) and the dash through the campsite to the finish.

Ben Abdelnoor (once of NFR) won the race. Steve Birkinshaw was third, and Lewis Grundy was also high up the list of finishers. Rob Stephens, Paul Hainsworth and Phil Green indulged in a minor battle for the mid-table places, with Dave Coxon bringing NFR home. Jane Grundy was NFR's lady representative. Other north-east runners who finished in the top 20 were Roger Tomlin (NYM) and Alistair Horsefield (unattached).

Old Cheviot suffered a giddy moment of excitement running off Crinkle Craggs when the lady next to him said she had won the race last year. However dreams of a fantastic finish were dashed when the lady commented that she was returning from injury and was about 20 minutes down on last year. Never mind, the race was enjoyable and the beer in the pub afterwards fantastic. Roll on next year.

NFR

The newsletter of
Northumberland Fell Runners

Chairman

Geoff Davis
9 Lady Durham Close
Sherburn Village
Durham
DH6 1RW
e-mail: geoffsusan@davis456.
freeserve.co.uk

Treasurer & Membership Sec

David Armstrong
Ladykirk
Belmont Gardens
Haydon Bridge
NE47 6HG
e-mail:
david.a@ribchesters.co.uk

Secretary & Editor

John Duff
10 Millfield Gardens
Tynemouth
North Shields
NE30 2PX
e-mail: johnduff.co.uk

Social Secretary & Kit Officer

Karen Robertson
Carr Houses
Halton
Corbridge
NE45 5PZ
e-mail: therobertsons@
carrhouses.fsnet.co.uk

Joint Social Secretary

Steph Scott
e-mail: stephscott0106@
yahoo.co.uk

NFR website

www.northumberlandfellrunners.
co.uk

Website editor

Rob Stephens
e-mail: patrob@btinternet.com

E-group co-ordinator

Colin Blackburn
e-mail:
colin.blackburn@durham.ac.uk

Relay Co-ordinator

David Atkinson
e-mail:
david.atkinson@virgin.net

Ian Hodgson Mountain Relay 2007

The Club once more entered a strong team in this year's event, which is the only team fell racing event that takes place on true mountain terrain. After two years of strong results, culminating in our highest ever finishing position of 12th last year, we were hopeful of another good performance.

For the first time since the 10th Anniversary race in 1995, the race took place in an anticlockwise direction rather than the usual clockwise route. There was a record entry of 70 teams. With 8 runners in each team this produced 560 competitors, and so must surely have been the largest pure fell-racing event of the year.

The first leg was a leg-busting 4.5 miles incorporating 2,840 feet of ascent with our opening pair being Francis Blunt and Aengus McCullough. The route started at Sykeside Campsite in Patterdale and ascended to Dove Crag, across to Red Screes and handed over to Leg 2 at the Kirkstone Inn. With a time of 1.04.59 Francis and Aengus achieved a very creditable 17th position, and might even have finished higher had they not lost a little time taking a slightly different descent line off Red Screes than many of the teams ahead of them.

David Armstrong and Steve Birkinshaw took over for Leg 2, a 7.5 mile route of 1,980 feet of ascent over Caudale Moor, Stony Cove Pike, High Street and The Knott and ending at Hartsop. They managed to make up six places by the highest point at High Street summit, but Dexter had suffered a twisted ankle on Stony Cove Pike that slowed progress on the descent and resulted in the loss of two of the gained places and a hand over for Leg 3 in 13th place in a time of 1.06.27.



Steve & Dexter set off on leg 2.

The third leg is a faster leg, of 4.5 miles and 1,450 feet of ascent, from Hartsop over Angle Tarn and down to the playing fields in Patterdale. An excellent run on this leg by Dave Atkinson and David Steel continued our progress as they finished in a time of 40.53 and moved

us two places higher to 11th position. This raised us to the highest position the Club has ever reached at any point on any of these relays in its 10 year history of entering.

Our anchor leg pairing was Nick Swinburn and Charlie Stead and we wondered whether such a strong pair might just lift us even higher and into the hallowed turf of the top 10. It was a tough ask, with many teams choosing their strongest pairs for this last leg, the hardest leg of the event at 7.5 miles and a whopping 3,130 feet of ascent over St. Sunday Crag, Fairfield and Hart Crag. Nick and Charlie ran superbly against tough competition to maintain our position of 11th at the finish in a leg time of 1.17.16.



Nick and Charlie on the final run in.

Borrowdale Fell runners won the event for the 13th consecutive occasion. 11th out of 70 teams was a record finishing position for us, beating our previous best of 12th out of 62 teams last year. This was an excellent effort for a Club that is based so far from the steep and rough terrain of Lakeland, which makes effective training for such an event so difficult, and whilst including 3 Vet runners in the team. It was a result based on great consistency and an excellent balance in the pairings with Steve and Dexter, David and Dave, and Nick and Charlie all building on Aengus and Francis' sound start by running the 11th fastest leg times of the day on each of their respective legs.

Well done to everyone. We'll be going some to improve on that next year...but there were a couple of our top runners unavailable this year, so who knows?