

URBAN BUNNY RUN RACE REPORTS

RUN BUNNY RUN

From countryside to Keighley town centre and the 40 acres of terraced gardens, woods and grasslands of Cliffe Castle, that's how the Bunny Runs managed to overcome the nation-wide shut down brought about by the Foot and Mouth regulations. In fact that's why 'Urban' was added to the race name title.

Certainly the rumours that the course would be flat, boring laps on grassland were totally unfounded, in fact quote of the races was, "This is a race for studs", whether this lady meant the male runners or the course has yet to be answered but what did greet the athletes was more an old fashioned X-Country course with a few Woodentop variations :-

Two flights of stone steps leading up to the finish by the "porte-cochere" outside the museum building.

A tunnel under the 18th Century Castle itself.

Some particularly technical wooded sections.

Plenty of grassy 'ups and downs', actually more than the Bunny Runs real hutch/home on Harden Moor.

Add into this all the normal features of the "Bunnies", Egg Stage, Crème eggs to all, guess winning time competition, pint of orange / beer drinking contests not to mention mountains of various Easter egg prizes. The highlight for most though is the post race frivolities of the famous chocolate throw out, where Crème Eggs and Chocolate Chunkies are literally thrown out to the ever eager and enthusiastic spectators. Just ask Robert Jebb, who failed to keep his eye on one!

There was bound to be something to suit all tastes.

"TAYLOR MADE".....Bunny Run One

32 year old John Taylor won his first ever Bunny Run, thereby collecting the much coveted perpetual trophy of a lifelike cuddly bunny, with all previous winners' names engraved down its belly. He also won the 4kg of Quality Street awarded for the Egg Stage in a time of 5-57, along with the masses of Easter Eggs, cakes, double chocolate beer, etc. Definitely the handling of prizes proved more technically difficult than beating the other 177 runners in the wet muddy conditions.

"This race was ideal for me, because it's just an extension of the X-Country season which has been reasonably ok, with 5th in the Northern and 21st in the National. Ian and myself both had colds, and after winning the Egg Stage I found my throat was very sore. He caught me on the second lap, and we ran together until we turned into the tunnel; on the descent I really let myself go on the soft grass this gave me the winning margin as Ian had given up, anticipating the National 12 stage at the weekend. I was also glad he had! Because I was thinking the same".

John has always been a class act and way back in 1986 in the World Trophy in Keswick he finished 3rd junior for England, he also was 10th at the Edinburgh event in 1995. In between he has been competing in Duathlons, is a former National champion and has represented his country in the European and World

championships. He has now virtually stopped cycling, which was always his weaker event in the duathlon, he also found it not beneficial for running especially downhill. This year was intended to be his comeback on the fells, until of course Foot and Mouth took hold of the country. Hopefully by now fell running is back to normal and John has fulfilled his ambition to gain international honours again and dominate the domestic scene.

Another first, was Pauline Munro who enjoyed the wet muddy conditions to collect the cuddly bunny with 21st overall, just one second ahead of the first over 50, Steve Moss, another newcomer. Now, a fully-fledged Bingley Harrier member, Pauline led her club to the ladies team award with Helen Johnson 4th and fells captain, Kirsten Bailey 5th. Evergreen over 50, Barbara Carney, also added to Bingley's tally of prizes, along with the men supplying the first four home. Before under 16 winner Mark Buckingham finished 5th, and in the process recorded his 5th under 16 victory, a minute elapsed before over 40 Steve Oldfield collected his Crème Egg and notched up his 13th Bunny triumph.

With an egg-cellent prize giving venue at St. Anne's Catholic Social Centre, an interesting course and enthusiastic runners, all rumours that it wouldn't work or that the event would be swamped with runners were totally unfounded. Just as the Woodentops had predicted to those of little faith.

"MUNRO BAGS ANOTHER".....

Bunny Run Two

Leeds solicitor Pauline once again left the prize giving nearly carrying her own weight in chocolate prizes for winning again. She described the virtual two lap route, "as a kind of uphill X-Country, and I certainly intend next year to do the X-Country season, which in the past has never appealed to me. I love running in woodland, so the technical, muddy section in the trees was ideal. The one thing I have discovered is at the end of a working day it's hard racing mid-week, you just don't feel like it, but then that problem is the same for everyone. Anyway, once there you always enjoy it".

John Taylor could echo what Pauline had said, since he'd been Flymowing at Bradley Golf Club on the outskirts of Brighouse, as part of his job as a green-keeper there and felt very heavy-legged due to this strenuous activity. "With now the Egg Stage having been moved half a mile into the race, Mick Hawkins and I really went for it. Big mistake. My heart rate must have been unbelievable, I could even taste blood afterwards and we literally jogged until Ian caught us. Mick took the prize, with let's say a tactical block, as I chased him down. I thought I'd lost the race then, and blown it, because of the lactic build up. But surprisingly, I recovered and when Mick in his road flats fell and stumbled in the wood it encouraged me. On the second lap Ian and myself were contested by Rob Hope, until Siggie Gould caught us in the tunnel; up to here I'd been gathering myself. Siggie struck first out of the tunnel and I again was virtually out of control passing the aviary and found the slimy ground unnerving but I stole the winning yards there, just like last week".



"John Taylor (117); Ian Holmes (30) and Siggie Gould (16) battle it out at Bunny Run 2" (Photo Dave Brett)

This was the closest ever Bunny finish, with only 6 seconds separating the first four runners, much to the excitement and adulation of the large crowd on the terraced gardens in front of the museum.

John hasn't had his training too disrupted by the Foot and Mouth restrictions, because, although it's boring, he has been able to run 3 mile laps round the golf course which he tends, no road running there, notice!

Once again Bingley dominated both men's and ladies' team awards.

The pint of orange and yard of ale post race festivities provided Sean Rank and new Army recruit Lisa Richardson with orange victories in 49 and 56 seconds respectively. In the beer supping/dribbling dad Julian Rank finished in 65 seconds before Ian Taylor, John Egan, Zip Jones, Will Smith, Robert Jebb and Nathan Lawton provided the spectators with much entertainment.

"HOLMES OUSTS JINX".....Bunny Run Three

After being beaten twice in two weeks, Bunny run legend Ian Holmes put all his running ability, knowledge and 'lucky' items to good use to overcome John Taylor. Race number one was back on his vest, after a mistake last week by the organisers. Ian also wore his lucky black and white Walsh shoes, which had seen him triumph at the Soreen Stanbury Splash in January; these two omens weren't lost on John Taylor who quizzed Ian before the race. The brilliant tactician that Ian is, he played on all these omens. Even to the extent that while John carried out his full warm up session with interval sprints, etc., rival Ian could be seen just, well,.....chatting. In to the race he returned to his old tactic of taking the lead early and putting pressure on the chasers by giving them the task to catch him, the opposite to previous weeks.

All this obviously worked a treat as Ian won by 9 seconds, to record his 19th Bunny win; amongst his chocolate prize hoard was some Thorntons chocolate dyed and scented boxer shorts, just what the man about town wants?

A new name to the Bunny Runs after testing the water the week before was 15 year old Chris Hart of Burnley. He improved his time by a minute and finished 5th., only seconds behind former

British and English champion Gary Devine, in this his only fell race to date, to take the under 16's title. Now shod in proper fell shoes as against trainers it shows how beneficial proper footwear is on the right talent. An excellent all rounder he excels at X-Country, being this year the Red Rose and Mid-Lancs champion. On the track he's no slouch either with 2-04 for 800m, 4-15 for 1500m and 9-22 for 3000m.

Chris also went with Mark Buckingham in chase of the Egg Stage award but was beaten there with Mark recording 2-12. This effort certainly put paid to Mark's challenge in the rest of the race, as he suffered later on to finish 'only' 15th and 2nd under 16. Common sense told him not to go for it but young enthusiasm and race conditions got the better of this talented young Yorkshire man and his name now nestles easily on the Egg Stage honours list.

Second again to Pauline Munro, 20 year old Sarah Dugdale has each week been hanging on that little bit more at each race and has certainly enjoyed the competition. Not a particularly good downhill racer at her own admission, the grassland suited her more X-Country talent, where she is the reigning Yorkshire under 20 champion and has represented Yorkshire numerous times and run in all the major events. This Royal Mail post-lady loves the fells most and has won the Yorkshire Fells title at various ages and was 2nd in the FRA English championship last year.

As she is a self confessed chocoholic the prize awards couldn't have gone to a better home, although the question begs, how, with all the hoards of chocolate that is given out, no runners seem to put an ounce on in weight?

With 60 ladies competing in the 3 mile race and 211 runners altogether, the races seemed to be getting a little more popular and with even a contingency from Lancs & Morecambe finding Keighley it's obviously the place to be on a Thursday night.

"HOPE AT THE FINALE".....Bunny Run Four

With all Bingley's stars told not to run because of that weekend's National 12-Stage Relay; Holmes the series winner in 94', 95', 98' & 1999, dare not challenge, so John Taylor won overall.

But in front of 239 runners, P&B's Robert Hope collected the armfuls of chocolate goodies and other paraphernalia to finish 3rd in the series with Gary Devine 4th.

Having competed in the mini London marathon county challenge, Mark Buckingham, with another win here, ensured he took the under 16 honours for the third year running and in fact finished a creditable 3rd overall this evening.

Another bunny regular, V40 Steve Oldfield, took his 16th win and 5th straight series title, whilst Malcolm Coles won the over 60's, emulating his over 50's title in 1998. His choice of chocolate on each occasion, Lindt, must have kept his wife sweet as she's from the country of its origin. It was these Lindt Gold Bunnies that all category series winners collected, along with choice off the table.

In the under 16 girls the two lovely Lauras - Livesey and Kemp, both enjoy success on track and X-Country, where they have represented their schools and county. It was 14 year old Livesey's luck to accidentally get bitten by Angus, her pet border collie, days before the event. With her left hand bandaged and giving her a 'bit of jip' she could only manage third on the night but did win the pint of orange again. Meanwhile Kemp knew she had everything to run for in a nail biting finale, needing the win, having

missed BR1 because of year 10 school test week. Like Buckingham and Matthew Pierson, she also visited England's capital, London, to compete in the experience of the mini marathon and its occasion.

Over 60 bottles of the now famous and much sought after Briscoe's Brewery, 'Holmsies Bobtail Brew', went to the leading overall prize winners, this year saw the label change to a picture of a young Ian Holmes dressed as a cowboy complete with rifle and neckerchief. Lemonade was awarded to first under 16 Mark Buckingham, much to his shock, followed by raucous laughs as a bottle of beer was then handed to him, but not before a check that the parents were present. This race must be unique to be able to present these types of awards to under 16's, but strangely enough it's always the parents that acquire the contents.

Lady-wise Pauline made it 4 out of 4, while Sarah Dugdale unfortunately strained a calf muscle on the first lap, whilst challenging and couldn't continue but with three second placings she couldn't be beaten to the runner's-up spot.

With two prize-givings that night, BR4 and overall, some £800 worth of chocolate eggs and other merchandise found its way off the prize table and into the packed function room. In fact the prize givings take much longer than running the races but the evidence of 200 runners turning up to a park in Keighley on four consecutive Thursday evenings is testimony to the affection with which the Woodentops are held within the fellrunning fraternity.

That night's Egg Stage was about 300 yards from the start line, so potentially any of the 240 runners had a chance - 'haring' from the front Paul Crabtree hung on by the narrowest margin from Bingley team mate Jonathon Airey, in 45 seconds. These two then rapidly dropped down the field, to eventually finish up 64th and 65th respectively.

"EGG-FANTASTIC".....The Relay

The sunny weather brought the runners out for this the 'fun bun relay', where any concoction of teams is admissible, all the requirements are that 3 laps of the race route are completed carrying the relay egg baton.

The whole emphasis is on making teams up with your family, friends, rivals or if you're really sad you can compete the event solo. Prizes are on offer to the normal men, ladies, V40's, U16 boys and girls, but also to mixed, family and solo teams and of course it's all Easter Eggs they're competing for!

An amazing, and frightening for the organisers, 97 teams congregated on the lawn outside Cliffe Castle museum. After getting their green egg, yes the Woodentops painted them green, to ward off any funny business that might have been hatched beforehand. Leg one runners were lined up for the start in the massive rockery and grotto drive which dates back to 1878, (which probably has never seen the likes of), and set off for their one and three quarter mile circuit of the route. Near chaos ensued at the changeover as frantic incoming finishers tried desperately to safely hand their baton without breakage over to their jockeying teammate.

Team Jebbowacky didn't however have any such problem as Robert Jebb finished second in 8-57 to Ian Holmes 8-51, and handed over to his mum Anne for leg two. This is what the relay is all about, with a smile on her face she set off only to find that 66 teams overtook her before handing over, still with the smile, to husband

Peter for a time of 17-01, much to the delight and admiration of everyone watching.

This was by no means the only outstanding family team efforts, the Peacy's with brothers Andy and Martin along with dad Barry finished second family to the 8th placed Wadsworth clan; Richard, James and Sam who incidentally won last year.



"Pete Carr of K&C Fatboys holds off a chasing group"
(Photo Dave Brett)

Once again some great thought went into team names from a contentious, 'Come on Bambi light my pyre', 'See u at the finish', 'Egg on legs wimmin', 'Kayandsee Kittens and Kats', 'Clayton Hens', 'Cool Running's' to the extreme like 'Tod Tossers', 'Billy No Mates' and 'The Sad Whittakers'.

The first under 16 girls' team, incredibly beat all the ladies' teams, so consequently collected a case of 'Auntie Stella' as well as Gold Bunnies and very large Easter Eggs. These young girls Laura Livesey, Victoria Snape and Danielle Walker claim to have a secret legitimate way of carrying the baton egg and maybe for a price will disclose it. Their team name 'The Strongest Link' was thanks to one of the girls' uncles who suggested The Weakest Link - much to their disgust. Victoria announced 'The Strongest Link' and so there it was born.

How Ian Holmes, John Taylor and Siggy Gould came up with 'Ho-Lord' only heaven knows but they easily had the edge on the 'Hawkins H' team of Robert Hudson, Steve Hawkins and Mick Hawkins, last year's winners.

As for the Napoleon Solo award, the Army's Dale Jessop won by 2 seconds from 'Beep, Beep' over 60 Malcolm Coles, who incidentally has been keeping race fit by competing in race walking events, desperate times seek desperate measures.

Last year Skulduggery reared its ugly head, (see Bunny's June issue 2000), it was here again, but in a different format of a mixed family team of dad Jeff, son Matthew and mum Jeanette trying to redeem themselves. They did so admirably to finish 51st team with times of dad 11-46, mum 14-21 and son 9-51, the latter having already run first leg for the first U16 boys team 'Yellow Gloves'.

You've now run around the park, why not visit the free museum with its extensive displays of Archaeology, Natural History, Crystals, Stained Glass, Bygones Rooms, Rocks and Fossils and Galleries. Well worth a visit, just like the races.

NB: In case anyone was wondering, all these races were carefully thought through and had the full backing of the Fell Runners Association and appropriate authorities regarding all aspects of the Foot and Mouth epidemic.

THAT'S ALL YOLKS!

"Runny Egg"