

UNLUCKY 13 FOR THE HARDEN MOOR BUNNY

By Eileen & Dave Woodhead

How to start this 'tail'?? In October when the bunnies were booked in to the FRA Handbook and Calendar everything was in order, police permission given, countryside commission sanctioned, moor key gates obtained, negotiations with the model aeroplane club, farmers with access to the moor notified and, as always, a mail drop organised to all the stables/ riding establishments who might use the bridleways on the moor on the Tuesday nights through the Bunny Run season. But then, three weeks prior to the races, the Guide Inn landlady moved the goal posts, so to speak, after being OK about them in October. Demands were then made that we should up the entrance fee so the pub would not lose money, since the statement was that they lost money on these events. How this is possible is beyond us, because the pub has always been packed to the rafters for thirteen years now, as anyone would testify who has enjoyed the somewhat enthusiastic prize giving. Also all previous Guide Inn proprietors have been overjoyed to have the business and have bent over backwards to make the event what it has become. The question also begs, why wasn't it mentioned in October that the Guide Inn had lost money on the 2004 bunnies?

First off we will NEVER EVER add money onto an entrance fee to have a prize giving in a public house, this is totally against what we believe in as race organisers, the pub should be more than happy to have people through the door and if they can't make money on them then surely they are doing something wrong. Our races off Penistone Hill, where we return to the Old Sun Hotel, have no problems, and they even go out of their way to supply FREE SOUP & ROLL to all who attend the prize giving.

So our first obstacle this year was that she wanted money for us to stage the bunny races; at such short notice we had no

option, so money crossed palms, much to our disgust. However it didn't stop there, car parking became a problem, registration had to be done in a little alcove in the pub, as in the past photos had been displayed on the windows this now became an issue, even toilet paper became an issue and the final insult was when she said that, "runners were disrespectful of the pub". Next year she wants to see a levy on all runners, that way the Guide Inn would not supposedly lose money.

So there was an undercurrent in this year's Bunny Runs, but hopefully this didn't detract from the experience for the 1200 plus athletes who attended the four race series and the finale, the Bunny Run Relay.

BR1 - for chocoholics only

Besides our dilemma over what was happening behind the scenes, BR1 took place with a massive 267 runners racing round the three mile route, all for the customary Crème Egg and mammoth chocolate prize giving. 'Southern softie' John Heneghan finally got his hands on the perpetual cuddly bunny rabbit trophy, which is only available at BR1 to first man, first lady and first V40 and he also won the egg stage prize in 3-21, a slow time considering the tail wind. The V40 cuddly bunny is firmly hatched in the Andy Shaw household now for the 4th year, obviously Andy's bedtime stories, lots of carrots and his daily cuddles are keeping the bunny happy.

Remember last year we said, "Blue is the new you"? How right we were, because U14 English Champion, Blue Haywood, started her BR campaign by not only winning her age group, U14, but "Blue" away all the U16 girls, and more impressively left all the senior ladies in her wake as she recorded a new FU14 & FU16 record of 21-44. Second to Blue was 2004, BR2 winner Lisa Mawer, who had recently won the South Leeds 5 road race,

but last September 37 year old Lisa damaged her knee just after setting the fastest time at the Northern Road Relays and only found out much later it was a fracture. "I have only been training since late January, so was well pleased with my run, I suppose I did go down the steep descent like a fairy, because I was passed by loads. It was on the steep slippery banking that Blue and Amy just powered past. I thought to myself, not having that, will have to pull my socks up in future, but could do nothing that night." The main reason Lisa ran was so Rosie and Harry her children could compete because they had had their own training programme since watching mum triumph last year. All bunny runners know that your shoes must be tied tight, double knotted, taped to your feet, otherwise the glutinous, evil smelling knee deep bog will soon swallow them, never to be seen again. Amongst the bog's victims was aptly named Jonathan Hare of Halifax Harriers who finished in his socks in an astounding 6th overall and first U16.

BR2 - the Holmfirth night

"Born to win, superstar", Mark Buckingham returned to record his 10th egg stage win and third BR win to deny John Heneghan, who at the weekend helped Yorkshire to win the men's Inter Counties title at Wrekin. Mark first competed here in 1997 to finish 103rd in 22-29, and since then has won the U16's title nine times and been second U16 five times. It has also come to our attention that way back in 1999, before we had the U14 age group, Mark in BR1 ran 20-36 to finish 29th overall, just ahead of Sarah Rowell, hence we have amended the U14 record.

Holmfirth Harriers also supplied the lady winner, Natalie White, Natalie not only obtained her third BR win here, but had just finished third in the Inter Counties at Wrekin and helped Yorkshire ladies take gold team medals for the

first time ever, making it a grand Yorkshire day out. Natalie, like "Sharky", had first competed in the bunnies as an FU16, and had finished second to Stefana Duniec in the overall 1996 series. Second lady, Sharon Taylor was also one of the "golden girls", while "Little Blue" tried in earnest to exhaust the organisers' chocolate supply by yet again reducing her own record for FU14 and FU16, this time by an incredible 25 seconds.

Loud at the best of times, the Holmfirth contingent nearly brought the roof down when Mr. Consistency, Andy Shaw won the V40 title for the 10th time, with once again an astonishing 265 turning out, with 55 of these being BU16, 20 FU16 and 49 senior ladies.

BR3 - the Cumbrian raid

The Kendal home of Rob Jebb and partner Sharon Taylor was all the sweeter after their taking their first ever bunny wins on a cool dry evening, although the underfoot conditions were wetter than of late, making the steep slippery banking much harder to negotiate, hence the slow times. Twenty-two year old Jorge Thomas was the surprise package of the evening, running in the colours of Cardiff AC, and he raced to the egg stage prize in 3-30, ahead of a staggering 277 athletes. Studying creative writing at Leeds University, this was only his second ever fell race, having finished third at the Withins Skyline, so he was a bit of a "raw egg" as to how the race should be run and road shoes didn't help his cause. It was on the hill where Jorge struggled the most and ended up pulling on tree roots and digging his fingers into the earth to manhandle himself up the 1 in 2 climb. Rob however is an old hand at these courses, but why he chose this to be his final speed session before winning the 3 Peaks on the Sunday is quite baffling - rumour has it he didn't want to be left at home. Will Rob now become only the second athlete ever to do the double

and win the 3 Peaks Cyclo Cross, for which he will be favourite? Sharing the car with Rob and Sharon was twice British and current senior English champion, Lou Roberts, who although told to set off fast by Sharon, was totally caught out by the ferocity and enthusiasm of the runners at the start of BR2, but progressed to third here behind Blue Haywood. Sharon is also one of those juniors to have come through the BR ranks, and it was Bingley Harrier, Ruth Whitehead, who talked Sharon into competing at BR4 in 1995, where she ran 25-07, now Sharon, like Natalie is one of the best runners in the country. One thing Sharon has remarked on is how times have changed – “Now it’s unbelievable how fast the junior boys and girls are running and more encouraging the amount of them; hopefully they’ll progress into the senior ranks.”

Nick Pearce celebrated his 52nd birthday to finish just behind Sharon Taylor to take the V50 chocolate egg prizes and along with Alistair Brownlee, 17, and Katie Ireland, 14, had “Happy birthday” sung to them by the slightly off key fell running crowd.

BR4 - the wet one

On a very wet night last year’s overall series winner Mark Buckingham duly collected his personalised crate of Briscoe’s beer, named, “Sharky’s Best

Bitter, the beer with extra bite” at the prize giving, but before this he had demonstrated his fleetness of foot to take three seconds off his own egg stage course record. After a week’s illness he needed a short blast, to test himself for the 3000m British University Championships. (He finished a vest away from victory). BR1 winner, John Heneghan duly caught the lactic acid leg filled “Sharky” to go on to win and take the overall series.

Surprise, surprise, Andy Shaw won the V40’s yet again, notching his tally up to twelve wins, as the nearest veteran was club mate Julian Rank amongst the 215 runners.

Blue Haywood, after running 10m-12s for 3000m at Sheffield easily had the pace to leave Sharon Taylor and Lou Roberts way behind, although these two had competed at Moelwyn Peaks, the British Championship race at the weekend and they said their legs were dead. Like “Sharky”, Blue is immortalised on the Bunny Run overall series 2005 beer bottle labels, and was chuffed to little mint balls to see the label “Blue’s Little Tipple - small but very strong”, underneath her picture. She got dad Russell to carry the crate, since her arms were full of chocolate eggs.

These limited edition bottles, as anyone who has won one will know, have become a much sought after collectors’ item. Yet again the pub accused the runners of disrespecting them by drinking this unique

beer in the pub, instead of drinking what the pub bar was selling. This as you all know is sheer fantasy and a sacrilege to a good beer, which has seen at minimum three weeks of toil, sweat and fierce competition to earn. We have yet to see the proof of this accusation, although we had to be very diplomatic.

Unfortunately despite all our best efforts, the pub wasn’t interested in accepting our usual contribution of £70 towards the overall buffet, which in the past thirteen years the Guide Inn has been happy to lay on. That was the reason behind all 215 runners at BR4 receiving a small 100g box of Cadbury Crème Egg minis as they crossed the finish line. It was the best we could do in the difficult circumstances and actually everybody who ran got the benefit, whereas the buffet only benefited those at the prize giving. Thirteen years ago when we first ventured with the BR’s, the idea behind the buffet has always been that the pub would make extra revenue and since the runners were eating, they would need an extra drink or two.

BR RELAY - the sunny one

The same men’s team won again, Mark Buckingham - 12-27, Lee Siemaszko - 12-52 and Chris Doyle - 12-55, just that they renamed themselves, “The North X1”, why, who knows, but they beat the “Bingley Boys” of Ian Holmes - 12-49, Andy Peace - 14-06 and Rob

Jebb - 12-47 easily. “Sharky” ran the fastest leg and the third fastest time ever, behind Mick Hawkins’s 12-13 and Mick Hill’s - 12-17. This year saw two solo runners, with 17 year old Alistair Brownlee finishing 5th overall, with an impressive running display, although the bog monster managed to suck him in on first leg, so he finished covered from head to toe in grime. The other solo runner finished 17th overall, Mark Richards, who entered as the Lonely Heart, and had competed in costume at the London Marathon as a heart to finish there in 3hrs 1mins and first fancy dress. For the ladies Sharon Taylor ran the fastest time, 15-44, which puts her 6th on the all time list, with team mate Lou Roberts doing 15-51, and along with Saz Rowell, 16-48, “Team 100” took the honours. Why “Team 100”? , it was their combined ages. U14 Amy McGivern ran the third fastest time that night, 15-53 and along with sister Ruth, and Beth Pettit took the FU16 title, with nine chocolate eggs to share. Interestingly their combined ages don’t even add up to Saz’s.

Sixty teams competed, with a change from the usual relay egg baton because this year saw the baton being a box of three Cadbury’s Crème Eggs and it was up to the team to get them round safely, before they could scoff them. It was rumoured several third leg runners just kept on running, since they had the baton and the spoils of their team’s efforts.

So hopefully none of you were disappointed with the 2005 Bunny Run series but to be honest the pressure we have had to endure makes you wonder why you bother - especially when a broom is thrust in your hands to sweep the pub floor after you’ve already cleared away all the debris from the prize giving!! It was only the passion you runners have displayed for the bunnies that kept us going at times and your inexhaustible hunger for everything associated with these low key evening races.

THE FINAL CHAPTER

ON THE NIGHT OF THE RELAY RACE, THE PUB PUT BUNNY STEW ON THE MENU.....

WE CAN’T BELIEVE SHE BOILED THE BUNNY!!



Bunny Series Lady winners - Sharon Taylor, Natalie White and Blue Haywood
(Photo Woodhead)