

The Bunny Runs

A great learning curve 21 and still growing

These races have become a great learning curve for many youngsters, with the likes of Alistair and Jonny Brownlee, Mark Buckingham, Graham Pearce, Marc Scott, Sam Tosh, Ben Livesey, Matt Pierson, Ian Wellock, Sam Watson and all the Addison family (Tom, Mark, Jos and Rory) all having competed as juniors over the past twenty one years. Junior girls who are still competing now are Sharon Taylor, Natalie White, Holly Page, Emma Flanagan, Lucy Needham nee Griffiths, Mel Hyder, Louise Pickles and Haywood duo of Blue and Bo. The reason for the races success is very simple: lots and lots of chocolate, a course which allows the youth to test their speed against the seniors and often beat them and finally FUN!

Fun is the reason why world triathlete champions Alistair and Jonny had made the races a must in their youth, they even cheekily entered the races under the club 'Yorkshire Youngsters'; Ali first competed in 2000, finishing 57th from 228 runners while Jonny finished 102nd in 2002 from 234 runners and Ali won the U16 title nine times. Even youngest brother Edward has joined in the fun, all having been introduced to the chocolate mayhem by dad Keith, another competitor. To mark the marvellous achievement of the Brownlee brothers being selected to compete in the triathlon at the London Olympics in August, the numbers for each race depicted a different Bunny picture of them and an eggcellent message to encourage them to succeed in their quest to attain an Olympic medal. Neither has yet won a bunny, but Ali has vowed to win one in 2013, there's even a bet on it!

BR1 – Freaky weather

Just a few days previously the country was bathed in sunshine and 23 degree temperatures, great sunbathing weather, but there was no chance of that on Penistone Hill, as it was a case of finding layers to put on for the 302 runners, with freezing temperatures, strong winds and a blizzard to contend with.

Recent winner of the Baildon Boundary off road half, Ilkley Moor and the Soreen Stanbury Splash, Tom Adams, stormed to his third win and sixth Egg Stage win. Not bad for someone who first appeared in 2005 and managed to finish 55th in 21-59.

Tom, fifth at the first English championship race at Lads Leap, will now have the honour of taking care of Jorge the perpetual cuddly rabbit trophy. 'Why Jorge?' you may ask. Well that is because it is named after the course record holder Jorge Thomas.

2011 U23 English champion and last year's



Zoe Baistow in a clutch of runners at BR1

Photo © Wayne Byram



Series winner James Hall battling the elements at BR1

Photo © Wayne Byram

The 2012 Bunny Runs have been the subject of enquiries from the FRA. As a result the 2013 Bunny Runs will have to be policed very strictly.

The reason is that numerous breaches of the FRA Rules for Competition, the FRA Safety Requirements for fell races and the FRA Welfare Policy occurred by juniors with the support of their parents deliberately avoiding compliance with the FRA rules, ie Age as at 1st January 2012.

Despite the three registration desks having qualified club coaches manning them and taking down the information, signs displayed with the race rules and ages, all entry forms having Age as at 1st January 2012, the woodentops website and the FRA Forums having the same information, there were still some juniors who mistakenly entered thinking they were ok to compete.

For the 2013 races, any under age runners breaching the FRA rules will receive a race ban from the organiser if they compete.

Photo © Wayne Byram



Above: Declan Bulmer (16), Joeeph Howe (52) and Rob Furness (212) at BR1

Below: Matthew Horn part of the Three Amigos relay team

Photo © Dave Woodhead www.woodentops.org.uk



Eggstreme BR1 weather challenges.
Jack Muir, Jacob Hellewell, Sophie
Spencer, Jimmy Burke, Diane
Haggar & Lucy Farquhar

Photo © Wayne Byram

BR1 winner, Tom Addison, gave chase to finish second, with his cousin Mark third and in fourth was 2011 U16 English champion James Hall.

Bunny girl Katie Walshaw, winner of the Ian Roberts race, won for the seventh time and took her sixth Egg Stage. In second overall and first FU14 was Elizabeth Greenwood and in third was FU16 Molly Traviss.

Not even the weather could dampen the spirits of the runners at the prize giving, maybe it was the home made soup and roll, the warmth of the Old Sun Inn or the yummy prize chocolate Easter eggs, who knows, but it was packed! To round the evening off 2011 FU14 English silver medallist Elizabeth Greenwood helped Dave and Eileen with the legendary chocolate throw out, if you didn't catch anything, maybe you need to practice that part of the sport.

BR2 – Its now 31 up & counting for Ian

Everyones favourite fell runner and Mr. Bunny, Ian Holmes, once again proved the master of the course by winning for the thirtyfirst time, showing that injury will never stop him from displaying his prowess at these races, as he was the only one to break sixteen minutes on the windy showery night, in a field of 301. 'I decided to run to show Andy Peace how to do it. I was surprised to be so near the youngsters after the Egg Stage, because since the Borrowdale race when I damaged my knee, I have only managed around 20-30 miles a week. I caught James crossing the boggy section, there Max put a big spurt in after being cheered on, which was his undoing because of the strong head wind,' said the now 46 year old.

Ian has competed in most of races for the past twenty years now, having first appeared in the

second running of the event in 1993 when he finished second to Greg Hull. He is also amongst an elite crowd, who twenty years on are still competing: Malcolm Coles, Colin Moses, Robin Bradbury, Tom McDonald, Paul Mitchell, Pauline and Lindsey Oldfield.

Youth was allowed to fight it out for the Egg Stage choc and U16 Max Wharton, the 2011 English Uphill champion had the speed to fend off the 2011 English U16 and Yorkshire champion James Hall. Max looks to be putting his injuries behind him now and finished third behind James, who was fresh from winning the U16 race at Pendle. Seth Waterman won the U14, Alan Wright the V50 and Steve Carter again the V60.

Katie Walshaw, having just won Pendle fell race three days ago in a very fast 35-37 in sixteenth overall, still had the speed in her legs to equal Scary Mary Wilkinson's 2007 Egg Stage time of 3-59, an astonishing feat. The 27 year old only faltered towards the end of the race to miss Mary's course record by seven seconds and considering the weather that record should be within her grasp as she finished twelfth overall. Former FU14 and FU16 Bunny champ Mel Hyder who was third at Pendle, finished second with Jo Buckley third. Elizabeth Greenwood and Molly Traviss dominated the FU14 and FU16 categories again.

This race also celebrated the eighteenth birthday of Rosie Hellewell in true Bunny fashion, with an elite number and her having to wear bunny ears and a bob tail. At the prize giving it was a raucous rendition of 'happy birthday', a multi signed birthday card, flashing bunny ears and an ultimate giant cupcake, before the finale where the Keighley and Craven athlete helped throw out the Cadbury crème eggs, sweets, haribos etc. to the eager mad crowd, what a way

to spend your birthday!

BR3 – 'Run for my bunny'

'I didn't think I was going to be able to keep that young whippet James at bay, he certainly gave me a run for my bunny,' said now four times winner Tom Adams. 29 year old Tom, the Egg Stage record holder, made the race a procession, storming away from the off to win in 3-29 with ease for the seventh time. But it was U16 James Hall, who first hopped onto the route in 2008 finishing 68th at BR2 in 20-03 to finish fourth U14, who lit up the night with another second place overall and a new U16 record, taking ten seconds off his own mark. He finished ten seconds down on Tom, but had U23 Yorkshire champion Fred Slemeck and four times BR winner Willy Smith in his wake. James made history by being the first BU16 to become the series winner with a fourth and two second places and will now be immortalised on the bunny beer label and wins a case of beer! Don't worry folks his dad Roger is ok with it.

Seth Waterman won the U14 category again, Andy Brown the V40, Alan Wright again the V50 and Steve Carter again the V60, while evergreen Malcolm Coles the V70.

Katie Walshaw, fresh from finishing eighth on leg one of the National 6 Stage Road Relays the previous weekend, won that chocolate again for the eighth time in a fast 4-02. Katie is also equal top of the carrot with Kath Drake on nine BR wins now and looks certain to take that crown next year, while her photo will star on the series bunny beer again for the third year. Durham University student Holly Page, third and first FU23 at Lads Leap, finished second, whilst Pendle race FU14 winner Elizabeth Greenwood took third. Kath Farquhar, Katies coach won the FV40 again,



Third leg runners awaiting the pink coloured egg

Margaret Jagan the FV60 again and 2010 FV50 English champion Gill Myers returned to win that chocolate category.

BR Relay – Pretenders take the crown

Max Wharton, Bradley Traviss and James Hall who called themselves 'The Young Pretenders' took the relay crown, showing the other 86 teams how easy it is to transport the pink egg baton round the 1.5 mile loop. Max the Anniversary Wa U16 winner ran the fourth fastest time of the night, Bradley the Anniversary Wa U18 winner ran the fifth fastest and James, 26th in the U17 London Mini Marathon, ran the fastest time at 9-25, which now ranks him fifth on the all

time leader board just behind a Mr. A. Brownlee.

James Logue, part of the 'Lancs and Paddy' team, ran second fastest on the night and helped Tim Ellis and Shaun Godsman to second team overall. In third came the solo team 'Only the Lonely' made up of Tom Adams, who left the team, 'The has beens' consisting of Andy Peace, Ian Holmes and Andy Brown, in his wake. 'The has beens' consolation was winning the V40 title and setting a new record by nearly two minutes.

Holmfirth Harriers supplied several winners, among them the first family team, with Lewis Byram running two legs along with dad Wayne to finish eighth team.

'Lone bunny', Katie Walshaw made history by being the first solo female to hare round the Penistone Hill course, although Sarah Rowell did successfully manage that on the old Harden Moor route. Katie recorded a time of 33-31 to finish 12th overall and in the process record the three fastest times of the night, 11-01, 11-11 and 11-19, so she now holds four of the fastest ever leg times, only Helen Glover in second spoils a clean sweep.

Anniversary Wa FU14 winner Erica Byram teamed up with sis Lucy and Olivia Sykes who was fresh from finishing 29th at the FU13 Mini London Marathon. These girls all wore bunny ears, bob tails and face paint to win the FU14 goodies. Known as the 'Pesky Kids' last year, the 'Pesky Bunnies' this time round broke their own record by 33 seconds. A Holmfirth 'Topless trio of Indians' in the form of Andrew Farquhar, Lewis Bartholomew and Seth Waterman won the first fancy dress team prize.

In the mixed category it was the 'Won Millions' with dad Mark, mum Rebecca and son Ruairidh, just ahead of the first ladies team, 'Too hot to Handley' where Beckie Taylor ran twice with Grace Handley. Caroline Harrison, Sharon Newbold and Patsy Hall showed mums can be record breakers by taking the FV40 title with the aptly named team, 'Trying to run as fast as our sons', so watch out sons, your mums are after you!



Dave McGuire leads FU14 Bunny champ Lizzie Greenwood, Ben Johnstone and Tiarnan Croken at BR3

Why Running?

By BU14 Bunny and Greater Manchester Fell Champion George Lewis of East Cheshire Harriers

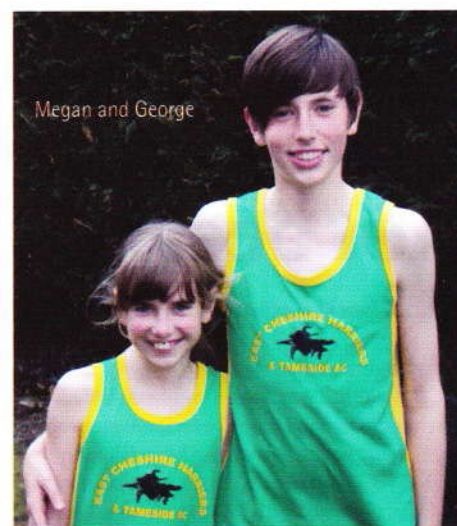
I will do any event possible on the track and field, as well as doing cross country, road, and fell. This summer, I am participating in the English Fell Running Championship for the first time. I have a younger sister called Megan, who runs for East Cheshire Harriers like me. I believe that it is great to have a younger sibling as they can use you as their role model. They can also use your achievements to inspire their own personal targets as they develop as athletes.

I have been running since I was in year 6, when my headmistress, Mrs McGowan, asked if I wanted to take part in the Tameside Primary Schools Cross Country Championship. I agreed and ended up leading our school Holden Clough Primary to its first ever trophy. Since then I have achieved several other accolades at cross country including: Year 7 Tameside

Schools Champion, Year 7 Greater Manchester Schools Champion, second in the Greater Manchester U13 Championships and on the fells Greater Manchester U14 Champion in 2011 and 2012. This year I was chosen to represent my county Greater Manchester in the Inter Counties XC, I was also selected to run for my region North West in the London Mini Marathon. Unfortunately, this clashed with the second round of the English Junior Fell Running championship, at the Anniversary Wa! So no chance of a hoodie for me or any of the others selected to represent their counties in London, what a shame! On the track and field I have been awarded the Greater Manchester Champion title at 100 metres, 200 metres, 1500 metres, High Jump and Long Jump.

Running is not my only activity. I also participate in badminton, tennis, football, hockey and golf. Basically, I will give any sport a go as long as it's not javelin throwing. I am also a member of a local Scouts troop, Second/First Hurst and last year had the privilege to go to South Africa to work in a wildlife sanctuary. Whilst I enjoyed the heat in Africa, back in the UK I will run in any conditions, which has showed over the last few Tuesdays at the Bunny Runs, where I won the under 14's age category in pouring rain!

I have a wide selection of supporters who spur me on, but my main ones are my mum, Susan, dad, Martin, sister and grandparents. Although one set of grandparents live in



Spain, they still get regular updates from my dad. When my grandad, Ron visits he does try to come and watch me race. This is probably because he used to be a good club runner himself many years ago.

East Cheshire Harriers organise a yearly trail race in July, a route which takes us through Daisy Nook and Park Bridge. It was a family affair last year with me, dad and my sister, Megan, running it. We hope to repeat the experience this year.

A normal training week for me consists of many sessions: Monday & Thursday with Eddie Shaw doing speed work; Tuesday with Shirley Aldridge in Daisy Nook, running up and down the hills there; Wednesday's training with Eddie varies, in the summer I do field events such as high jump and long jump, whereas in the winter we go to our gym followed by a long slow run.

I hope my article has gone some way to explaining my life as a dedicated runner and the passion which inspires it.

Photo © Wayne Byram

George battles with the elements at BR1

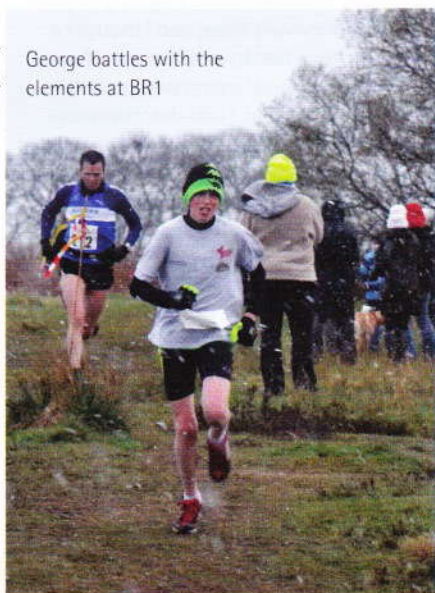


Photo © Tim Done

66 George Lewis chased by Dave McGuire, Lizzie Greenwood & Tiarnan Crocken



I run because I love it, not because I have to

By BR Series second lady Sally Ratcliffe of Stockport Harriers

I started running four years ago when I was 14, at the time I was a keen swimmer and also attended dancing classes several times a week. My parents have always been keen fell runners and so I decided to give it a go. I first started running with my dad a few times a week and seeing the small improvements in my fitness and speed made me determined to keep going. At this age most runners had already been running for several years so ever since it has been a game of catch up.

I joined East Cheshire Harriers and competed in track and cross-country soon after taking up running. I never had any outstanding performances in the first few years, but getting personal bests and improving my positions in cross country races meant I was slowly but surely improving all the time. I was training with a strong group of girls my age and I gradually worked my way up into the team. In 2010, Georgia Taylor-Brown, Emma Peters, Katie Reynolds and myself won the Northern Road Relays and the Northern Cross Country Relays, which set us up nicely for the bigger cross country's in 2011; at the Northern Cross, we placed first team and then placed third team at

the National.

Following this success, I decided to take up fell running. My parents always suggested I should compete on the fells when I was younger, but I never really enjoyed the gruelling challenge of steep ascents and rough ground. However living near Saddleworth on the edge of the Pennines has made me embrace the hills and now I love the challenge of them.

I competed in the FRA English Junior Championships last year and although I was pleased to come second overall, I knew I could do better in the individual race positions. With it being my first year of racing on the fells I lacked confidence and the mentality needed to produce a better performance. I was determined to improve on my positions so I decided to focus on the championship in 2012.

This year didn't get off to a great start, I picked up a knee injury over Christmas and found myself unable to run over January and February. In March I started to run, but was only able to run on soft ground so I could only train on the fells. This definitely made me stronger and running up hills so regularly helped me regain my fitness pretty quickly. As I started running



Sally Ratcliffe powers to a FU18 win at Pendle English champs

Photo © Dave Woodhead www.woodentops.org.uk

again, I changed clubs to Stockport Harriers. Andy Owen, my coach and a smaller group of athletes were moving there, and I thought a fresh start after a break would be good for me so I moved too. I tend to train once or twice a week with this group, I have become more independent now and train either with my dad or on my own. Andy is a great coach, he supports and encourages me at both races and training and helps me decide on the specific sessions I need to do to improve. Moving to Stockport has also given me the opportunity to consult with England junior team manager Bashir Hussain and adapt my training programme to focus on

BR3 Paul Mitchell, Sally Ratcliffe, Sharafath Ghafiri, Wayne Byram & Matthew Barnes



Photo © Tim Done

mountain and fell running.

I tend to do two to three sessions a week, consisting of tempo runs, hill reps and speed sessions on the track. The days in between the sessions are typically spent going for easy recovery runs or resting. My favourite training is a long run on Sunday as it gives you time to enjoy running and you don't have to worry about keeping to times or pushing yourself too much. My least favourite session is faster reps on the track as I don't have much speed, chasing down the other members of my group makes the reps quite exciting and makes me train really hard. It's always satisfying to complete a tough track session. I usually swim at least once a week as well to have a break from running and add a bit of variety to my training.

Over Easter, I did the Bunny Run series for the first time, as they looked fun and exciting. They definitely did not disappoint! The weather conditions changed every week, which made every race different and varied. I thoroughly enjoyed the races and the course made it all the

more exciting, as it was a rollercoaster of hills and bends, with fast sections and slower sections. The prize giving was also the best I've ever seen. There were Easter eggs stacked up to the ceiling and it was impossible to leave without armfuls of chocolate! I love these races as they are so competitive, but so much fun at the same time.

I've attended FRA junior training camps in the last year, which were combined with the Welsh squads. I found these really useful, as there were many coaches and athletes there who were able to offer advice and ideas on training, racing and other lifestyle choices. We were able to have question and answer sessions with elite mountain and fell runners and learn about their experiences. There is also a great social side to the training camps and staying with a big group who all share the same love for running makes them really enjoyable.

Other than running, I enjoy swimming at Saddleworth Swimming Club and have recently taken my level One coaching qualification, so I can help coach the younger swimmers in the

club. I love this job and I hope I can continue to coach swimming or athletics in the future. Aside from sport, I am taking A levels this summer in Biology, Maths and Physical Education and hope to go to Loughborough University to study Sports Science in September.

My parents have always been very encouraging and supportive of my running and I really appreciate this. They both come and support me at races or training, and are forever taxiing me around the country, but are never pushy or strict with me. My dad is the best training partner, he has a wealth of experience and he takes me up onto the fells away from home and is forever finding new routes for our runs.

I don't have many long term goals at the moment, I just want to keep improving and see how far I can get, I like to take one year at a time, because set backs such as injury can have a devastating effect. But most of all I want to enjoy myself and run because I love it, not because I have to.

My beloved egg stage

By 7 times Egg Stage winner Tom Adams of Ilkley Harriers

Daffodils are in bloom, the newly born lambs have a spring in their tails...it can only mean one thing, its time for the Bunnies!

I think this is probably about my sixth year doing these runs, and although I've finally won one, they don't get any easier. I probably don't do myself any favours by hurtling off at the start to try and win my beloved egg stage, I guess I'm just greedy when it comes down to chocolate.

At number one, the Addison's turned up to make things a little more interesting. As usual I went off far too quick, but took the Egg Stage, only to immediately regret it after the build up

of lactic acid in my legs kicked in on the first hill. I thought I was done for when I caught a glimpse of Tom and his cousin Mark working together to catch me. I thought that if I managed to fend them off until the top of the quarry, then I might be in with a chance. At the top of the quarry, they were breathing down my neck, so I had to go flat out for the final section. Although the taste of blood was evident in my mouth, I managed to give one last push on the final hill to win by a mere nine seconds.

Number two was spent off the coast of Italy in Sardinia with my lovely wife for our one year

Tom Adams with the BR1 trophy Jorge – it could be named Tom if he took the course record

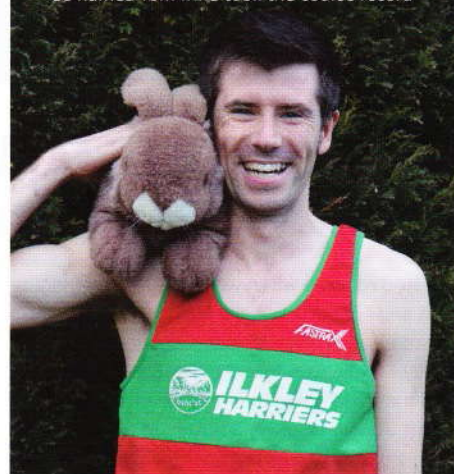


Photo © Dave Woodhead www.woodentops.org.uk



Relay Solo runners
Katie Walshaw & Tom
Adams with the relay
egg barters

wedding anniversary. This was all good and well, but having an anniversary in the middle of the Bunny season could mean that I never get my ugly mug on a bottle of Bunny Beer again!

Number three saw the likes of Willy Smith, Freddie Slemek and the ever improving James Hall turn up to try and get their grubby hands on the chocolate. Once again, it was a case of a flying start to win the Egg Stage, closely followed by Willy. There is always someone to give you a run for your money at these races and tonight it was James Hall. He finished just ten seconds behind me and if he's this fast at under sixteen, then who knows how good he'll be in a few years. I'm sure he'll be winning a Bunny or two next year!

These runs are probably the most fun you can have at a race. I love the atmosphere at the start, the end of the race and in the pub. Its fantastic that everyone, however young or old are happy to stand around in the freezing cold waiting for Dave and Eileen's little camper van to turn up in the quarry to start the race. Everyone is there to have a bit of fun, with a nice three mile challenge in between. Thanks to everyone who is involved with the Bunnies...same time next year?



Photo © Dave Woodhead www.woodentops.org.uk

Matthew, dad John & Victoria Merrick with Katy Boden – who cares it's snowing?

It's being tough, that makes it good!

By U14 Matthew Merrick of Bingley Harriers

I started running when we moved to the Bingley area and I changed primary schools aged 9 and I became a pupil at Eldwick Primary school. Firstly, I met a new friend called Ben Nicoll who told me to go down to Bingley Harriers as a laugh. Ben was already a runner in the Harriers and said they had lots of fun on a Tuesday night. He also said I would meet a lot of new friends, so as I was new to the area I went along with my twin sister Victoria who also likes running.

At first I found it difficult to keep up with the good runners, but Tony Kingham the XC coach, thought I was showing signs of being a good runner. So he asked my dad, John, if I could become a member of the junior running squad and join in with the cross country races they enter. I really enjoyed the training and pack runs, I felt I was getting fitter and faster as I could keep up with the kids in the fast group.

Training is on a Tuesday and this is a fun run. Cross country races are usually on a Saturday and these are great. In my first year at the Harriers I won:

- The Most Improved Junior XC Runner, and retained this for 2012
- First in the Peco XC League BU13 and also retained this for 2012
- Won 8 XC medals at various events

I also started to do fell running with Andy Nicoll, our club Junior Fell Manager, this is even more fun, as we run up lots of hills with lots of mud. Andy trains us on a Saturday morning and we also train on a Thursday evening.

On the fells I have won:

- The Ken Smith Junior Fell Cup for Best Male Junior Performances
- Won the Bingley Harriers Young Hound Of The Month Award for December 2011
- Joint second Bradford Area Network Fell and Terrain League
- Won 5 medals for various fell races

My favourite foods are chilli, nachos with rice or a Fray Bentos pie, and my most favourite meal is mums Sunday Dinner!!!

For race day, I start with porridge and a banana and 30 minutes before the race I have some flapjack and another banana. Favourite races are the Shepherds Skyline, Anniversary Wal, the 4 Bunny runs, and the fantastic Quarry Run races.

I have been so lucky to meet Jonathon and Alistair Brownlee at the Yorkshire Cross Country championship race at Thornes Park, Wakefield. This was a real high and I'm traveling to London to see them get Gold in the Olympics for Britain and for Bingley Harriers. When I'm older I want to be like them, and study sport, and then do a career in sport, perhaps as an outdoor adventure leader or gym instructor in the army. Or even perhaps a sports physiotherapist with Leeds United, because I go to see them as often as I can, and I play football with Eldwick Juniors.

I love sport, especially running on the fells. The hills and fells are great fun, muddy and tough, but it's being tough, that makes it good. I really feel that I have achieved something when I have finished a race.

Running with my sister, and now my dad is really good, but I especially love running with my friends Ben Nicholl, Alex Stewart and Henry Moorhouse, because Bingley Harriers are the Best. I also now have friends in Keighley and Craven, Jimmy Lund and Wharfedale Harriers, Josh Newbold, Charlie Lowrie and Thomas Nelson, this really makes racing very interesting.



Photo © Dave Woodhead www.woodentops.org.uk

Over to you son, don't break it! Dad John hands over to Matthew for the Muddy Merricks team

So my friends become competitors

By GU14 Victoria Merrick of Bingley Harriers

After I changed schools in year 5 to Eldwick Primary when aged nine, I started running a few races at the school sports day and found I was doing well. Then my PE teacher Mrs Haggart a runner with Ilkley Harriers said because I was doing so well, that I should try and do some races against other schools in Bradford at cross country. I was picked for the school cross-country team, and I did some races. I really enjoyed this. In year 5, I managed to finish in the top ten and then in year 6, I improved to coming second and third in races.

My friend Olivia Roper then suggested that I and my twin brother Matthew should come along to Bingley Harriers with her, and run for fun on Tuesday nights. We really enjoyed this and so we joined the club.

We started doing cross country races against other clubs and our team coach Tony Kingham really encouraged us. We were doing well against the other teams.

In my first season, 2011, I got the GU11 Cross Country Trophy at Bingley Harriers and came second in the GU13 Peco XC. In 2012 I finished second GU13 in the Peco XC and have also won 8 medals for first, second and third placings. At cross country I have now competed in the Championships at the Yorkshires in Wakefield, the Northern in Pontefract and the Nationals at Parliament Hill, London, which was a great thrill.

At Bingley Harriers I found out about the junior fell team. Our friends were all doing fell races, so we went along to a training session to see what went on. I was the only girl, but found that competing against the boys really made me much faster. Andy Nicoll, the coach has been really good explaining tips and techniques and really encouraging us to improve. He tells us about all the races he would like us to compete in and my dad takes us to all of them. My dad has been on a coaching course and can now help with the fell training when Andy is off running himself, so it really is a family thing now.

In my first three months in 2010, I was awarded third GU12 in the club fell league and in my first full year I received the Bingley

Harriers Female Junior Fell Cup for the Most Improved Athlete. I have also won the GU12 Bradford Athletic Network Fell and Terrain League for 2011 and I've also received six medals for first, second and third placings in my first year of running the fells

My favourite fell race is the Shepherds Skyline, because it is steep and muddy. I love mud and often finish with my face covered in it or so my mum says. One of my dad's friends, Freddie, came over from Sweden to compete with my dad in the adults fell race, which was fun to watch.

My best race so far in fell running was Widdop Fell Race, organised by Calder Valley. This was because I broke the GU12 course record and I really felt I achieved something as this was my first attempt at this course.

Some of the races that I really enjoy take place on Penistone Hill near Haworth, they are the Curly Wurly Rat Run, Stoop and the Soreen Stanbury Splash. These take place around autumn and in the winter months and end up with us wearing Santa hats at the Stoop, where we all look so funny.

Another funny event, but a tough one, is the Bunnies at Penistone Hill again. These take place over a month at Easter ending with a Relay, where we have to exchange real eggs! Real Easter chocolate eggs are the prizes, thankfully.

I have many friends in other clubs including Erica and Lucy Byram, Olivia Sykes all of Holmfirth, Sarah Pickering of Ilkley and Ellie Lambert of Wharfedale. These all run in the U14 races at both Fell and XC, so my friends become competitors for the races.

In the eighteen months since joining Bingley I have really grown to love it and running is a huge part of my life. I also now train on a Thursday as part of the elite juniors, with three training sessions a week this is really improving my fitness. I also do gymnastics at Nab wood, because I still have lots of energy. I have loads of friends from many schools in the area and I now know many runners in other clubs too.

I met Jonny and Alistair Brownlee, at the Yorkshire XC Championship which has been a

real highlight. They really inspire me to do well and I'm looking forward to seeing them again when we the Merricks travel to London to see them win in the Olympics.

I am very busy at school and at the moment I'd like to be an airhostess, but I am now thinking that I'd like to do something more with sport, an instructor perhaps. Who knows? I just know that running will always be a big part of my life and that running will always be on the fells and fun.

Thank you to all my friends, family and the people at Bingley Harriers who have supported me in all the races and competitions.



Above: Enjoying Bradley Show 2011 GU12 winner Vic (right) with friend and second GU12 Lucy Shutt
Below: Victoria at Pendle English champs



Rebecca McLean, Victoria Merrick, Andrew Sheldon & Erica Byram at BR3



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