

AULD LANG SYNE 2003

from Dave Woodhead

After a decade of wins here the organisers presented Ian Holmes with a specially engraved Warner Brothers Tasmanian Devil watch and a small barrel of his favourite beer, Stella.

Certainly like 'Taz', he whirlwinded around the 6m/900ft course, even wearing road shoes to combat the treacherous frozen moorland, to beat his own seven year old record by 19 seconds. 375 toed the Penistone Hill Quarry start line as again our official starter, Ian's son Louis, now four, appeared dressed as Batman, with the runners bursting into song - you know how it goes, all together now; Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, Da, BATMAN!



Serious stuff at the start of Auld Lang Syne from Andy Shaw (Holmfirth) and John Wooton (Photo Kirstin Bailey)

From then on Ian led and ran against the clock. Since he often trains over the route he wore road flats, because he knows studs give very little grip on icy frozen terrain. A few other enlightened competitors brought X-Country spikes with them including Pumlani Gangani and Steve Bottomley who finished 4th and 5th respectively. An astonishing fact has come to light, Ian Holmes has won 57, that's 57, Woodentop races, 21 Bunny Runs, 4 Withins Skylines, 1 Heathcliffe and Cathy Canter, John's Run, 10 Stoops, 11 Auld Lang Synes and 9 Soreen Stanbury Splashes, although as you read this he may well have won another Soreen race. Admittedly in the above are two Ghost wins, that's when deep snow cancelled the races, but in both cases over 70 runners still appeared, so a race was run, and a win's a win. There is a question mark over Woody's 40th Birthday Bash, where Dave got a five minute start on all the runners, and just crossed the line first but Ian ran faster and will not accept this as a win. So is it 57 or 58? All this has been achieved since 1990 for the four times British and five times English champion.

Two weeks prior Paul Sheard celebrated his 40th birthday, so this was his first win as an 'Old Git' with an impressive 3rd overall, reducing Steve Oldfield's 1997 veteran record by one and a half minutes bringing it down to 35-42. A small contingency from 'hilly' Scunthorpe made their

mark as runners took the opportunity to see out the year racing with 4th man overall, first under 18, Sam O'Neill in 43-21, and a record breaker with Emma Clayton in the girls under 18's taking 2-14 off Kate Rogan's time; she also finished 4th lady.

First lady overall was Sharon Taylor, famous as the pin up girl on the cover of last February's issue of the Fellrunner magazine, with Sharon discovering the dark side of fell running, i.e. going A.O.T. into the mud. No chance this year, she'd more likely have been skating in her Walshes. Now

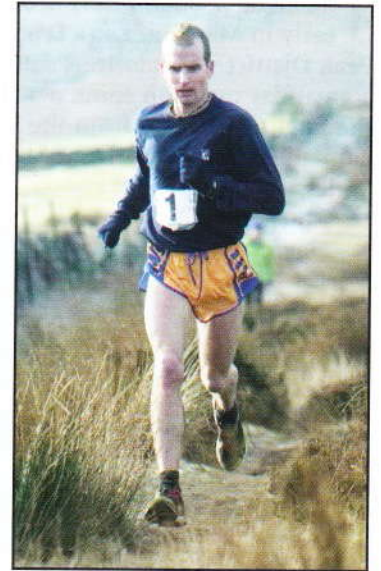
24, Sharon first ran here as an 18 year old finishing 5th lady, and has progressed every year to being the Queen of Haworth moor now. Ilkley's Sally Malir took 2nd, while over 40 Alison Raw just beat Emma Clayton by 1 second for 3rd.

Stanbury Stalwart over 50 Margaret Jagan improved her own three year old record by 42 seconds, returning a new time of 53-32. A special mention must go to 2001 and 2002 lady winner, Lucy Whittaker, who now lives in America and who unluckily broke her foot over there but still competed to finish 24th lady in position 274. How she coped with the conditions is beyond belief, especially with her foot in plaster, but husband Kevin made the most of it finishing in 133rd some 10 minutes ahead.

Jack Escritt, in his 27th race of the year broke Brian Leathley's, 2001 over 70 record by 3-28 to 58-45. Five foot five Jack, a former civil engineer in Bradford, who worked on the M606, commented, 'My duck style, short legs and long body don't suit the fast running of the water channel and skyline, hence I probably run a little too hard down the descents, especially with my age. To take the record is great, because many race organisers don't keep our age records, or recognise us. A pity, because I keep all my statistics regarding every race, and how my times compare to others'. Jack finished 291st, so still had 84 younger athletes in his wake, not bad for a lad who took up running aged 62. Ten years Jack's junior, Keighley and Craven chairman Tony Minikin broke the over 60's record of Lawrence Sullivan's set in similar conditions of 1995 at 49-09 to lower it by 1-31.

Apologies to Sarah 'Saz' Rowell for her FV35 record time of 42-04 set in 1999 somehow being replaced by the slower time of Sally Newman's. Obviously too much Briscoe's ale.

Talking of ale, many thanks must go to Dr. Paul Briscoe of Briscoe's Brewery for supplying all runners with a bottle of Auld Lang Syne Famous Ale, notice we give it out at registration, thereby you can keep it in mint condition, for all the anoraks that collect the bottles each year, and there's a lot of you out there!



Ian Holmes heading for 10 out of 10 at Auld Lang Syne (Photo Dave Brett)