



On The Start Line – A Month of Racing

HANDICAPPED!

July welcomed the first of the two Club Championship races with the Summer Handicap drawing a field of twenty two club runners. The always controversial handicap list had been held a close secret until just fifteen minutes before the off, generating the usual howls of the hard done by, as well as a few last minute bribes and whispered conversations...of course we at OTSL would never name the names...! Andy Whitworth put as much effort into being heard as he did later in the race as he attempted to explain the route over the nervous chatter, and then with Mike, Jeff and Graham officiating, we were off with John Gray and Martin Sturdy setting the pace. Over the next ten minutes each racer was released like greyhounds chasing down the runners before them, with a theory that the handicaps would leave



everyone meeting up in the last few hundred metres for a final showdown. John Gray had other ideas though as he led from the front to the finish, crossing the line just 8 seconds in front of Pete Dukes, showing real pace on his first handicap, having started 6 mins 45 secs behind John. In form Mark Hoath finished third, a further 26 seconds back, having started alongside Pete at the start. The fastest lap overall was bookies favourite Andy Whitworth, just under 2 minutes ahead of fastest lady, and second fastest overall, Penny Ditchfield. The Handicap placed the first five finishers within 44 seconds, and the top ten by 1minute 32; so not bad, but maybe scope to get even closer for the Winter Handicap in January.



HARD TIMES AT HOLME MOSS

After its brief flirtation with world fame as the Tour De France's Cote De Holme Moss, it was back to the day job of hosting one of the countries toughest old school Fell Races outside of Cumbria. Just three Meltham runners took up the challenge this year: Gilly Markham, Susi Sadler and Jeff Miller, and all setting off at a steady away pace as the weather started to switch from the low cloud threatening rain that was covering HM Transmitter earlier in the morning, to a humid and sapping heat. The race starts off from Cartworth Moor cricket club and it's not long before the first descent catches the unwary, an almost sheer drop with just clumps of heather and bracken to help stability. As I said, Old



School. After that it's a traverse to the bottom of Holme Moss car park where you have the chance to scare the tourists as you gaze eagerly at their ice cream whilst emerging from apparently nowhere; over the road, grab some water and then all that climbing disappears in a flash as

another manic descent to Heyden Brook, followed by the steepest climb up to Tooleyshaw Moor checkpoint. Now you're motoring as the line to Crowden is almost perfect, not too muddy, plenty of undulation. Through another checkpoint and then the pain starts as the climb to Bareholme Moss punishes tired legs. As a feature of the race, another (very) steep drop and climb to Laddow rocks was complicated by bracken so high you almost expected to find Ray Mears camped in the middle of it! Mountain Rescue were on hand at the top of the last climb to offer water and jelly babies, before the dash is back on to Soldiers Mound at

the top of Black Hill. From here the transmitter is an optical illusion as you keep running towards it without it ever getting closer. Tired legs now arrive at the car park for a final watering and looks of wonder / pity from the gathered cyclists. 'It's all downhill from here' calls the lying Marshall as you retrace your steps, which seem so much further than before, all the way to the bottom of that vertical drop from the start, but now it's a climb; the kind of climb that brings cramps and tears, not necessarily in that order. The ever chipper Holmfirth Harrier Phil Hobbs cheers you on from the top before the final undulating mile and a half completes a tough 18 miler. Gilly was first over the line for Meltham and in the F55 category in 4.34:59, with Jeff a few minutes behind at 4.37:04 having been caught by Gilly on the last climb and having nothing left for the last section home. Susi dug deep and refused to be caught by a small group behind her, dashing over the finish line in 4.48:45. A tremendous effort by the Meltham three and all finishers deserve a huge round of applause.

THUNDER RUNNING

A good number of Meltham runners attended this years' Thunder Run, a non-stop 24 hour 10k trail race. Tina Crowe was a late draft into Dexy's Midnight Runners, a mixed team of 8 runners, also including David and Susi Sadler. Two gender-split 5 runner teams saw Sharon Whitworth running for the Special K's and Andy Whitworth and Simon Edwards turning out for the Boy Bunnies. In the pairs race we found Amanda Crozier running with regular running partner Debra Howarth as Thunder and Lightning (although she doesn't state which was which...) Andy described the course as 'ankle breaking' and that was before the sun went down and the headlamps came out.

All teams however were unanimous in their praise for the atmosphere and Simon later made a call for a proper Meltham AC team for next year – OTSL says ‘Bring it on!’

For the record David managed 3 laps (in itself an achievement as he returns from a cracked rib), 4 laps each for Sharon, Susi and Tina (with her second lap of 57.33 the fastest Meltham ladies time). Simon completed 5 laps, including a late night trail 20k – not his usual cup of tea!) whilst Andy recorded the fastest Meltham lap with his first of five, a speedy 39.45 (the seventh fastest lap of any of the 5 runner male teams). Stamina award goes to Amanda for completing 7 laps in total, including *three* double lap 20k’s). I’ll leave the last word to David “I had such a great time at TR24 and was proud to wear my Meltham AC top – Cheers!”



THE HEAT OF THE PHOENIX

Having made the decision to dip his toe into the world of Ultra running, Jeff Miller joined up with Nick Thompson and Andy Lang for this year’s Osmotherley Phoenix 33 mile race (with 17 and 26 mile options), taking in a good chunk of the Cleveland Way as they went. Despite the early start the oven was already on and water bottles were being refilled before the, somewhat gratuitous, uphill start. A push through some trees and fields before the first main climb opened out into glorious scenery, with even a slight, albeit warm, breeze across the tops. The views kept coming as everyone settled into their pace and the miles kept ticking through. Checkpoint three was well placed at the bottom of a nasty climb that seemed to take forever to climb, but was well stocked with fluids and flapjacks. The exposed Moorland through checkpoints 4 and 5 meant that heat control was becoming a real issue, with headgear being soaked in streams to try and cool down. The climb after Chop Gate (around mile 16) is unnamed on the map, but deserves one, as runners were being destroyed one by one through the relentlessness of its incline through thick foliage. Once at the top, more exposed moorland under the midday sun was proving too much for Jeff who was learning the hard way about distance running and struggling to pinpoint exactly where he was on the route and as such how far the next checkpoint was. When he finally arrived (around mile 21) he was considering taking the one opportunity to drop out of the 33mile route and join up with the 26 mile route instead. Standing in the shade with cold water his body started to shake all over – decision made. Leaving a message for Andy and Nick, so that they would know his decision, he set off at a walk until feeling well enough to resume running. The reception back at the village was fantastic as all finishers cheered home runners as they came around the final corner. A sugary tea and slab of cake was as welcome as the cold water hose that was close to evaporating to steam as it hit the hot skin of sun-soaked runners. Jeff was back in 5hours

55 mins, and had enough breath to cheer Andy home 8 minutes later, having also decided to drop to the 26 mile route. We started to wonder if Nick was going for the full 33 when he appeared at the corner, 6hours 54, thankfully fully dressed as he later admitted running shirtless for a spell to try and cool down! Overall a great day out, a fabulous route, and at just £7 a bargain. There are questions over whether it will be run next year, we at OTSL hope it will be and recommend it to anyone looking at stretching their mileage.



MENTIONED IN DESPATCHES

- John Gray ran the San Francisco Marathon – full report and pictures next issue.
- Simon Edwards was back on familiar ground at the Helen Windsor 10k in 44:44
- And again at the Eccup 10 miler – 1.17:40
- Andy Whitworth came 2nd in July’s King of the Hill Wessenden race – 23.32
- James Young came sixth in the annual (Wo)Man versus Barge chase in 37.29 for the 5 mile (ish) course, with Ally Young 11th lady in 51:22
- Mark Hoath clocked another sub 45 10k with a 44.26 at the Harrogate 10k
- DON’T FORGET – Our own Cinnamon Trail has been cancelled this year. A tough decision by Mike, and we all wish him well on his ongoing recovery.

PARKRUN UPDATES

Meltham runners were all over in July, showing out at Huddersfield, Oakwell, Cheadle, Conker and Parke.

Just the one PB this month though – Tony Daniels picking up the pace with an 18.49

AUGUST CHAMPIONSHIP RACES

NONE

AUGUST FELL RACES

24TH – TOUR OF NORLAND

31ST – CROWDEN HORSESHOE

Been racing? O.T.S.L. want to know all about it – email: jeffmilleruk@hotmail.com

Photos and race reports are both welcomed and encouraged. Follow Meltham AC on Facebook for the latest results.

Keep training, keep racing and we’ll see you all next month - On The Start Line...