

It's the whacky Rat Races

You may have thought you'd seen everything on the fells, but if you'd come early to watch the junior races at the Withins Skyline event, then nothing could have prepared you for seeing kids scurrying around the Curly Wurly Quarry Runs some in the disguise of rats and rat catchers. Why? you may ask, well it's all thanks to Mike Ayers the director of Precision Pest Management who kindly sponsored the races, hence they were newly named the Curly Wurly Rat Runs. A runner with Abbey Runners Mike certainly got into the spirit of the occasion by becoming King Rat for the day, with Kings robe, a rat crown, a giant rat staff and he even went to the extreme of having a rat chewing on his brains (not a real one we hasten to add). This rat/pest theme was carried through to the goody bags where a sugar mouse was added along with the Curly Wurly, lollies, crisps, sweets and pop. Showing even the Woodentops are never too old to learn, a race certificate was added. This idea came from the winning entry for the poster competition in the FRA magazine, which was then adapted into a certificate for all the runners. Many thanks to 11 year old Lorna Jo Nunwick of Helm Hill for her imaginative design, who we hope enjoyed the prize of a tin of Cadbury's Roses.

To kick off this unusual event, music teacher and World Downhill Mountain bike champion, Karen Ballantine, was appropriately dressed as the Penistone Hill Pied Piper, and duly led the skipping competitors into the quarry playing, Three Blind Mice, Ilkley Moor Bat'hat, The wheels on the bus, Skip to my lou, Old McDonald had a farm and Wind the bobbin.

It was then time for Mike and his Queen rat, wife Sarah, to pick out the fancy dress winners, a fantastic new feature which added even more fun to the day. The winners were, (in no particular order), Poppy and Kitty Ballantine, Emma Spencer, Molly Holder, Olivia and Cherry Sylge, Ella and Lily Cavey, Oliver and Ciaren Crabtree, all ten of these won a box of roses and a blow up eyeball!

First off from under the crag, and to challenge the watery puddles were the fifty under 8 year olds, here Sam Foster, a new recruit to Calder Valley Fell Runners led all the way to finish in 3-16 with 2008 Soreen U8 winner Alex Robinson and Toby Kitching not far behind in second and third. Wharfedale Harrier Lucy Horrocks came first girl and was only 13 seconds behind Sam in fourth overall, second girl was Emily Cox in seventh and Sasha Kitching just pipped Tegan Knappy for third. This race is run first, and allows everybody to support and encourage these little nippers, who show great gusto, zeal and passion.

Next out of the traps so to speak were 69 under10, U12, U14 and U16 boys and girls all in one big race, the excitement here reaches a

frenzied fever pitch, and that is just from the proud parents as the runners stream up the climb out of the quarry and race off on their circuit. First back to climb up out of the quarry again was last years winner and still U12 record holder, Helm Hill Harrier U14, Rory Addison, with Josh Ferguson and Phil Done both U12's and both of Keighley & Craven, hot on his heels. In the U10's Luka Morus from Calder stayed a mere one second ahead of William Routledge from Keighley, although U8 girls record holder at 2-47 Lily McGuinness, now an under 10 beat them both to finish ninth overall, and she also headed all the other girls. Keighley and Craven dominated the U14 girls with Zara Knappy just two seconds ahead of Charlotte Cox, while Annie Roberts tried in vain to chase them down.

So many families compete here, the Galloways of Todmorden, the Brooks of Ashbourne, the Hearles of Mercia, the Holders, Knappys, Crabtrees, Cox's all from Keighley, which is just what these races are all about. Two families who deserve a special mention are the Wharton household, where Issy Wharton was the star winning the GU12's, while brother Max finished third U12. Over in the Pickering household, Sarah shone finishing second U10 girl, while James and Anna just loved the experience, all three proudly wearing the Ilkley Harrier vest.

In the two lap U16's race, Sean Carey splashed round in 12.12 to victory with Sam Richards and Daniel Furling second and third. Sean was only third U14 last year, and at the 2008 Soreen race finished second U16, but now all his hard work is paying off. This talented youngster even jogged round the senior route afterwards as a training run in under 52 minutes; that would incredibly have put him in the top twenty seniors. For the girls, first was Preston Harrier Nichola Jackson followed in by Minnie Mouse by name and by fancy dress, A.K.A. Emma Spencer with Hannah Godden third.



Crag Rats - Harry Seisford, David Wilson and Oliver Spencer

Photo © David Brett



A very determined Sam Foster - Rat Run U8 winner

Photo © David Brett

ONE DAY I'LL BEAT MY DAD IN A RACE !!

Under 8 boys winner - Sam Foster of Calder Valley Fell Runners

I got in to running aged seven because my dad, Steve, runs for the Fell Ponies club. He suggested that I joined Calder Valley Fell Runners, we train on a Tuesday night and my Dad comes with me and runs round with us all. When I won the Curly Wurly Rat Run I had never felt so excited in my life, and even made fists as I crossed the line, because I had never won a race before. I have run 7 races, the first one was the Shepherds Skyline in 2007 (14th), Reservoir Bogs 2008 (5th), Crag Vale 2008 (3rd), Widdop 2008 (3rd), Lantern Pike 2008 (3rd), Withins 2008 (1st) and the Shepherds Skyline (2008) 5th.

My ambition is to carry on running and to become a builder, I have made a vegetable patch in my garden and built a wall around it and this year I planted potatoes, cabbages, leeks and carrots, which all grew and we ate them. I like making things out of wood, I have made three bird boxes and a hedgehog box for my school. I have tennis lessons once a week and I used to play for Ryburn United football team, but I think fell running is much more fun.

I have a little sister called Sarah aged five, she doesn't do running as she likes to be carried everywhere. My mum, Rachel, helps me with building things and planting things, and always comes to fell races with my dad to cheer me on.

I have made a scrap book which has got all my race numbers in and photos of me running. When I won the Curly Wurly Rat Run I was in The Hebden Bridge Times so I took the paper into school and they showed everyone in my school assembly. I felt very proud.

I hope to carry on running and one day beat my Dad in a race, my Dad says I've beaten him already as the only way he will win a race is if nobody else turns up!

NOW I AM BIGGER, I AM NOT SCARED

Under 8 girls winner - Lucy Horrocks of Wharfedale Harriers

I have been going to fell races since I was a tiny baby because my dad Mark has done lots of running races and my mummy Juliet has done a few races.

We had a dog called Jip and he was a lovely dog, but now we have Meg and she is a lovely dog too.

When I go to watch a race, my mummy, my brother Sam, who is ten, me and our dog always have a nice walk along some of the course and cheer the runners on.

I have been doing running since I was four years old, and my first races were quarry races, at first I was scared and my Daddy had to run round with me. But now I am bigger I am not scared and like running round on my own. I like the goody bag at the end of the races because they have lots of nice things in them.

The first race I won was an inter schools cross country race at Foulridge earlier this year. I have done a few BOFRA races and done quite well in them, sometimes I have even won money at these races. I have been a club member of Wharfedale Harriers for quite a while, and run in their vest and it is a nice club.

Since September Sam and me have become

members of Pendle Athletics club, and every week we go to the Seedhill Track to train and it is really good. Now I go training I hope it will help me run much faster.

One of my other hobbies is cycling, my mummy and I ride a tandem together and Sam and my daddy ride a tandem too. We are in the West Yorkshire Tandem club and go on nice rides with other families and have some fun days out. The furthest we have ridden in a day is 50 miles and we ride up all the hills even if they are steep. The steepest hill we have ridden is a 1 in 3 near Rosedale. My mummy is sometimes very tired at the end of a ride but I am not so tired. I also have a mountain bike and we ride our bikes in forests, on old railways and on bridleways. Sam has a road bike too and when I am big enough I will have his bike and he will get another one. I have been able to ride a bike since I was small and really love it as much as running.

I also do gymnastics and I am famous for doing cartwheels. Once I cartwheeled right to the end of our road. Other things I do is going to Brownies, playing the violin and swimming lessons. When we go on holiday we go in our camper van. We have visited lots of different places.

Lucy Horrocks competing at Burnsall.



Photo © Eileen Woodhead

I'VE CLIMBED NEARLY 40 WAINWRIGHT TOPS

Second Under 8 Boy - Alex Robinson of Nidd Valley

'Hi, I'm Alex

I love fell running and have been doing races since I was allowed to at the age of 6. I did my first Quarry Run in 2006, but finally won one in January 2008 at the Soreen Stanbury Splash. I have 7 age group 2nd places and 3 age group 3rd places in different races so far.

Orienteering is another cool sport I enjoy, and I am now doing white courses on my own. The best orienteering course I have ever done was Vampire Orienteering in the dark at Nell Bank, Ilkley. Here there are Vampires with red torches, and when you see one, you have to hide or you get caught and then lose all your points, some runners even get dressed up to run it.

I enjoy mountain walking and have climbed nearly 40 Wainwright tops in the Lake District, and am writing this while on holiday in Keswick, Wainwright bagging in the rain and snowman building at the summit of Carrock Fell. When I was three I climbed Castle Crag and Latrigg. Mum, Fiona and Dad, Phil, said that when I was a baby my milk froze on Catbells, because it was so cold. Also, I have reached the summit of some Scottish and Welsh mountains. My favourite mountain is on the Isle of Arran and it is called Goat Fell, because near the top its all rocky, and you can climb and scramble around, which is what I like.

I think first aid is really important to know about so that's why I joined Knaresborough St. John Ambulance Badger group, and I have been a member of them for about 3 years now, and in 2007 won Badger of the year.

I play the trumpet and my music teacher, Duncan, has guided me through 2 grades, and I am now heading for grade 3. This year I've been playing some trickier Christmas tunes such as, O come all ye faithful, Silent Night and Once in Royal Davids City.

My favourite topics at school are Numeracy and History, and the best films are Prince Caspian and Kung Fu Panda.



Alex Robinson

Photo © Tim Dover

Photo © David Brett

Author and Ratfink: David Woodhead



CHOCOLATE and more CHOCOLATE, TOYS and more TOYS

The Rat Runs through the eyes of the Kitching siblings

Under 10 Girl - Zoe Kitching of Abbey Runners & Leeds Bradford Tri

'My name is Zoë. I was nine when I did the Rat Runs, but now I'm ten.

I liked the Rat Runs because it was very friendly and it included loads of people. It was friendly because people dressed up and someone played a saxophone thing, to gather the kids for the race, like the Pied Piper

The route was interesting! It included ups and downs which was really funny because you slipped and slid everywhere. The uphill were hard, but it was good. The down hills were also hard, because of the mud. Half way round I slipped into the mini lake, it was cold, but it added to the fun. It was really amusing because when the little ones set off three of them lost their shoes in the mud. There were some great pictures of them, on the Internet, splashing through the mud.

The prizes were brilliant, CHOCOLATE and more CHOCOLATE, TOYS and more TOYS, broom sticks, toffee apples and yet more chocolate. The best thing was the chocolate throw out in the rain ... it made it all worth while.

I first started running when I was seven,

and I did the Pudsey fun run and the Leeds 1/2 marathon fun run. I really enjoyed these, but my mum, Jenny, didn't and my brother wanted an ambulance all the way round. By then I'd got my Gold ASA swimming badge and I joined Leeds and Bradford Triathlon club, I loved it. About a year later I joined the Leeds Swimming Club and now I swim five times a week. Just this year I joined the new Abbey Runners junior club. I am also a member of the Adel St. Johns Baptist Primary school gym, athletics, netball and cross country teams. In my spare time! I play the clarinet, treble and descant recorders and go to Brownies.

Next year I want to move up swimming groups too and win gold in butterfly or front crawl. In triathlon I hope to improve my times and get a better place in the summer series of races. I was third in 2008 even though I won the Harrogate Childline Triathlon. I am practicing for my Grade 1 in clarinet and want to get grade 2 soon after. When I am older I want to be in the Olympics for Triathlon and learn to like my brother and sister!



Photo by Tim Done



Photo by David Brett

No. 23 Toby to the fore at the Stoop race

Third Under 8 boys - Toby Kitching of Abbey Runners & Leeds Bradford Tri

'My name is Toby. I am 8 and live in Leeds. The Curly Wurlly Rat Run was a great experience, it was so cold and wet, but really fun. The best part was getting muddy. It was great when I finished. I got a massive goody bag. The sports I do are: Swimming. I swim for Leeds City Swimming club. Training 5 times a week. Running: I run with Abbey Runners in Leeds. Our training night is Monday. We do drills and running games whatever the weather. On Saturday mornings I train with Leeds and Bradford

Triathlon Club. We always start with a swim then do running or cycling at Leeds Met Carnegie. I was second last year in the Yorkshire and Humber Junior Triathlon series.

I have 2 sisters which is annoying when you are a boy. I only have one pet, a mouse, Spotty, and both my sisters have 2. It's just not fair. I like watching TV, inventing things and playing the cornet. My favourite subject at school is PE! I want to be really good at swimming.'

Third Under 8 Girl - Sasha Kitching of Abbey Runners & Leeds Bradford Tri

'My name is Sasha and I am seven years old. I have two guinea pigs called Hera and Athena. I also have a brother and a sister that are older than me. I love dogs and want to have one. I go swimming and running and cycling and walking and I do gymnastics at Holt Park and Brownies at Adel Methodist. My running club is Abbey Runners, and I swim for Leeds City Swimming club.

The Curly Wurlly Rat Run was cold and wet. The hard part was the rocky bit. The best part was the chocolate throw out, when they threw out loads of chocolate. The prizes were great, because they gave broom sticks, toffee or chocolate apples and funny toys.'



Photo © David Woodhead

Kitching superstars - Toby, Sasha Et Zoe



Sasha Kitching climbs the rocky bit

'Mices To Pieces' - It's Poppy & Kitty

An exclusive interview with Poppy Ballantine age 7, who says she's done 100's of fell races and sister Kitty age 6, who says she only does them for the chocolate - a bit like her mum then.

Question *What did you wear at the Rat Run?*

Poppy A woolly hat with ears on and a whisker nose.

Kitty and a tail.

Q *What effect did dressing up have on the race?*

P I think it made more people join in as it was much more fun.

K It was great because you won extra prizes for dressing up.

K

taking part, the prize giving. The sweets.

Q

What's Dave like?

P

He's very nice and quite silly.

K

SILLY BILLYI, SILLY BILLYI! He wears silly hats and sometimes has his bum showing. *(For legal reasons this should be re-phrased to: he sometimes wears a kilt with a plastic bum showing!)*

Q

What was the best part of the Curly Wurly Rat Run?

P

Following the Pied Piper was great and it meant everyone knew the way to the start.

K

Having our photos taken following the Pied Piper and it being in the paper.

Q

Have you had any accidents at fell races?

P

Yes, I've slipped on the big hill you run down, but you don't hurt yourself.

K

If you run too fast your shoe comes off in the mud. It was funny. My foot got wet.

Q

So, is it an activity for people that like to stay clean?

P

No

K

NO!

Q

So will you do another fell race?

P

Yes

K

YES (shouting)



Kitty and Poppy Ballantine

Q *How would you describe a Dave Woodhead fell race?*

P Lots of people joining in and Dave never leaves anyone out.

K It's really fun and everyone gets a goody bag.

Q *So describe the atmosphere on the start line.*

P Exciting. It's like your racing all the children in the world

K It's a bit scary. It's like your running away from a thousand monsters chasing you.

Q *Is there anyone supporting you around the course?*

P Yes, there are always lots of people everywhere

K Everyone shouts for you like, **'KITTY IS THE BEST!'**

Q *What does your breathing feel like going up the hill?*

P Sometimes your throat feels a bit funny and you feel all warm

K (lots of heavy breathing impressions)

Q *What do you like about these races?*

P Every child gets something for



Kitty Ballantine, rats, she has to help daddy down the hill

King Rat Mike Ayers prancing around



Photo © David Brett

The opportunity of prancing around in a King Rat costume

Dr Mike Ayers - Director Precision Pest Management

I was recently looking at an old black and white photo of when I were nobbut a lad, and was struck by something odd, comparing it with photos of my children's friends. Then it hit me, all of them looked skinny. This was the 60's so it wasn't as if there was national austerity, the photo showed active, athletic children who just weren't fat. Sadly a state that many children don't achieve today. I feel we should encourage our children to get off the computer and get outside onto the hills - if not there then just outside and active.

Having derived enormous pleasure from fell running, I wanted to encourage youngsters to take part in something that should be fun, even if it takes bribing them with sweets. If it works then at least they will be able to run to the dentist rather than waddle.

Ask a dedicated fell runner why they do it, the answer won't be because it's easy. We all know it's hard, wet, boggy and often cold, all that's part of the pleasure, but there is in most of us the pang of emotion we feel when experiencing the beauty of the fells. The sheer joy of running through heather and bog in any weather, the exhilaration of the descent, and the satisfaction of reaching the top to be rewarded with the majesty of creation spread before us. Don't you want to share that? I do. It is said that if you teach good things to a child when he/she is young it will stay with them for ever - and that's really why I sponsored the Curly Wurly Rat Runs. If they learn to appreciate being fit and active now, it will stay with them in adulthood; and it definitely wasn't for the opportunity of prancing around in a King Rat costume, but that was fun nonetheless!