

Yorkshire Golden Junior Inter Counties

Mercia Fell Runners & Jim Tinnion hosted the 2016 British Fell Inter County Championships at the Stretton English Junior Championship races from near Church Stretton with tough combined U16 and U18 races taking in the summit of Caer Caradoc and Three Fingers Rock which provided superb views over the Long Mynd, Hope Bowder Hill and northeast to the Lawley and the Wrekin.

In addition the hill is full of history with its natural ramparts being used by iron age man and the Romans as an ideal fort.

Yorkshire once again dominated the championships running away with individual gold medals for FU16 Eve Crownshaw, MU16 Nathan Smith, FU18 Lucy Byram & MU18 Chris Law and winning all the team gold medals except the MU18 where Cumbria won, but only on last man count back with both teams having five points.

It's a shame that Yorkshire are still the only county to fully support these championships every year with a full contingency of athletes and reserves, these championships deserve better.

FU16 Eve Crownshaw crossed the finish line ahead of all the FU18 athletes and is having the best year winning the Yorkshire, English, Inter Counties and English Uphill titles while Yorkshire XC FU15 silver medalist Bethan Morley in second brought Yorkshire's team home. Poppy Cooke finished third and has now won an English FRA championship silver medal along with a team Inters gold to go with her 2016 English Uphill silver, while reserve Eliza Findlay finished eighth.

'It's like being on top of the world' by Eve Crownshaw

'I've been a cross country runner from the age of around nine, after following in the footsteps of my older sister Ellie and brother Jack. Whilst still in Year six, I started going out with their Bradfield Secondary School cross country group and continued this once I moved up to the senior school. Collectively, we were introduced to fell racing when our teacher Mr. Holmes (Keith), a keen and successful fell runner himself, suggested we enter the Derbyshire Accelerate's Gritty Series, a local fell race. Our cross country club started to grow in numbers, and as a group, we started to travel in the school minibus to various events in and around the Lakes. In 2013 we were rewarded with the English Schools Fell Championship title. As a school we've travelled long and far to attend the fell races, and although the early starts and weather are sometimes off putting, the freedom the fells gives you, is well worth it. I love fell running, as much for the camaraderie between runners as anything else. For me it's about determination, to get to the top of the hill and knowing that when you are there it's like being on top of the world and that is quickly followed by a rush of adrenaline as you fly off the top and hurtle at full pelt down the otherside.

Arriving at Church Stretton to represent Yorkshire in the Inter Counties after a three hour plus journey, should've been a relief after all the minibus isn't the most comfortable method of transport I know! However when I looked and saw the size of the hills I thought "Yep this is gonna be a challenge!", but I knew I'd done my race preparation, now I just had to get my head into gear. It's a 35 minute or however long hard slog and crawling up a hill on your hands and knees isn't everyone's idea of fun. I'd like to say I loved it, but that's not completely true. I can honestly say though that when you pass or are passed by a fellow runner and they say "Well done" and you say it back it makes me realise what a great sport this is to get into. And winning, well there's always that moment of disbelief, but that's just the icing on the cake with cherries on top! Even better when you find out you're also part of the Yorkshire winning Inter Counties team.'

'What a day and opportunity! Yorkshire team gold, and individual bronze at the junior fell running Inter Counties.'

It was an incredible day, one to remember, brilliant and a great experience. Not just because of the medals, but because of the atmosphere throughout the whole race my ears were filled with constant cheers and support for me and the other athletes and teams. The race was a lovely course, approximately 4 miles long with steep technical descents and a steep hill for the finish.

I started fell running about three years ago, after a year of running on the track. Me and my dad, Ian went for a Sunday long run on the moors and after beating him on a fast run down, he entered me for the Yorkshire fell running championships at Hellifield Gala as an U12, which I managed to win! Going into this event I had never done a fell race and had no idea who the competition was so it was quite a surprise!

Having always raced on the track since summer 2012, I knew how tiring it felt to finish an 800m race and collapse over the line, however I had never felt tired like I did at Hellifield at the end of a race! Even though every minute of the race was gut-wrenchingly hard, I had somehow loved it and my love for fell running has forever grown!' by Poppy Cooke, Leeds City AC

2015 and 2016 Yorkshire MU16 champion Nathan Smith who finished fourth last year, like Eve beat all the U18 runners to win gold and with Joe Hudson third, behind Joe Dugdale of Cumbria, Yorkshire easily won the team over Cumbria. Joe Hudson celebrated after the race having now won the 2016 U16 FRA English championship, while in the longest and toughest race he's run Euan Brennan finished a good eighth which now places him joint fourth in the English champs with Callum Mitchelmore. Reserve Kieran Loombe finished 20th.

'This season I was third in the Mountain Running Home International in Wales and third in the Great North Run, Yorkshire Fell Champion 2016 I then represented England again in the Czech Republic. I have a top five ranking in the country in triathlon super series and gained silver in the first triathlon of the series.

My teacher at primary school Mr Jacobs was very inspirational and always encouraged us to join a running club and race. I also started doing triathlons, and enjoyed fell running with Cumberland Fell Runners as my grandparents came from Cumbria. I came second in cross country in North Yorkshire in year six, then continued with my running at secondary school and started training at City of York AC. I became Yorkshire Fell Champion and English Uphill Champion in 2015 and won a silver in the FRA English championships plus a bronze in the U15 Yorkshire cross country champs. After gaining two bronze national medals in triathlon I was also selected for the Yorkshire Triathlon Academy.

When I won the Inters event at Church Stretton I was really pleased because I ran a well-judged race and broke away on the technical downhill towards the finish. I was then able to hold on to the win on the final uphill. It was particularly good to win the race because it was against U18's as well. Yorkshire had a really strong team which it was great to be part of because everyone encouraged each other to do their best,' said U16 Inters champion Nathan Smith.

Yorkshire champion Chris Law a bronze medallist last year won the MU18 race from Chris Richards and Elliot Matier both of Cumbria with Jimmy Lund fourth, this made it both counties had five points, but Cumbria won team gold on last runner count back, three runners compete, first two to score. Jack Denton finished seventh.

Lucy Byram in her first ever Fell Inter Counties won the FU18 gold and was followed in by Sarah Pickering in second and twin sister Erica Byram in third, Yorkshire won team gold yet again. English Uphill silver medallist Sarah was overjoyed because this second place means she is now the 2016 FU18 English FRA champion. Reserve Victoria Merrick finished eighth.

The whole team then finished off the day with Jack Denton & Sarah Pickering spraying two bottles of

fizz 'Grand prix style'.

Female U16 teams:

1. Yorkshire - Eve Crownshaw (1), Bethan Morley (2), Poppy Cooke (3) - 3 points
2. North Wales - Annabelle McQueen (4), Catrin Donnelly (10) - 14 points
3. Lancashire - Minnie Targett (7), Imogen Carter (9), Ella Tinman (11) - 16 points

Male U16 teams:

1. Yorkshire - Nathan Smith (1), Joe Hudson (3), Euan Brennan (8) - 4 points
2. Cumbria - Joseph Dugdale (2), Joe Edmondson (4), Harry Greenbank (9) - 6 points
3. Derbyshire - Alex Ediker (7), Lucas Parker (10), Dan Soles (13) - 17 points

Female U18 teams:

1. Yorkshire - Lucy Byram (1), Sarah Pickering (2), Erica Byram (3) - 3 points

Male U18 teams:

1. Cumbria - Christopher Richards (2), Elliot Matier (3), Michael Dugdale (11) - 5 points
2. Yorkshire - Chris Law (1), James Lund (4), Jack Denton (7) - 5 points
3. Staffordshire - Keayrn Hopley (6), Jamie Ward (9) - 15 points

NB: First 2 County runners count in team, 3 to run, hence Cumbria won