

The Auld Lang Syne is as traditional on New Years Eve as Christmas Dinner is to Christmas.

By Seymour Hills

This race is not all about racing, but more about socialising and having fun, which could be why a bumper field of 453 turned out on a wind swept Penistone Hill for the 13th running of this event. The popularity of this race just grows and grows, with only the Millennium race record of 532 being greater, although in the 1994 inaugural race only 137 runners ventured to the blizzard swept event. Once again a splattering of fancy dress competitors took the fun to a new level, with 'caveman' Ian Nixon and 'escaped prisoner', Chris Heys, being the fancy dress winners of tins of Heroes chocolates. Peter Parker, alias Spiderman of course, telephone 118 118 runner, a sexy cowboy in a pink stetson, shirt and boa, a tortoise, a hare and oodles of others made an appearance. As is customary Louis Holmes was the celebrity guest starter, he also got in to the spirit of things by being dressed as Sponge Bob Square Pants, last year King Kong was his fave, Louis is developing a taste for this running lark like dad, and recently finished third at the U8's Stoop Quarry run. Another ten years could possibly see Louis win the Auld Lang Syne, here's a scary thought the Woodentops will be silly old goats, doddering around in their sixties!

Former English and British champion Simon Bailey, second last year to eleven times winner Ian Holmes took his revenge, equalling Ian's time, but the record now goes to Simon. The reason is the farmer asked us to run down the fields like the Soreen Stanbury Splash route, but climb back up via the next few fields, thereby making the course 100 yards longer, and a little steeper. Farmer Steven doesn't want to spoil anyone's enjoyment of the outdoors, so this compromise means his green pastures are worn more evenly by the hoards of runners. 'Grand folk are farmers', say the Woodentops.

Simon along with Olivia Walwyn of Altrincham and District AC will now be immortalised on all the beer labels for 2007, just like last years winners Ian Holmes and Natalie White were. 23 year old Olivia also broke Natalie's course record by 13 seconds, with new recruit to Bingley Alison Raw second and Lisa Lacon third, Lisa did break The Giant's Tooth ladies record on New Years Day.

Olivia is fairly new to fell running, but has been running on road, track and cross-country for about 8 years as a member of City of Norwich AC. She always enjoys cross country races - 'the muddier and hillier the better', and finishing 13th in the senior race at last year's National Cross-country is probably her best result. Norfolk wasn't the best place to try fell running, but having moved to Altrincham in 2005 with partner Tom Bush, who she met at Durham University Cross-country Club, she has now managed to fit in a few races. In May she won Belmont Winter Hill and then a knee injury through the summer held her back before returning in September to win the Lantern Pike fell race. The pairing have really enjoyed fell running, especially because there is always such a friendly atmosphere, and intend to compete more in 2007.

'I arrived at the race not really knowing what to expect, and I didn't have long to think about it as we arrived with only about 10 minutes to the start! It turned out to be a brilliant race with lots to keep you interested. To start with I got pushed quite near the back as it was a big field, but I soon started to work my way through. Then there was a bit of a surprise with the steep hill down to the river. I must have lost a lot of ground as I was a bit too careful sliding down the hill in the mud, (this is definitely something I need to get better at!) but I enjoyed splashing through the river and tried to make up for it by picking up places on the way up the other side, as there was a long gradual slope up to Top Withins Ruin. The river slowed me down again on the way back, but luckily there was enough smooth ground for me to out sprint the alternative first lady (who I think may have won a fancy dress prize?!). Little did I know the true test of strength was yet to come: I was a bit puzzled on finishing when I was asked if I'd got a strong arm? I soon found out why as I was piled up with mountains of chocolate and beer, which I'm still working my way through...'

Olivia Walwyn – Altrincham & District AC - first lady & new record time of 49.15

Leeds based company, **Crosstrax**, once again kindly donated 4 pairs of fell shoes to the free prize draw in the Old Sun Hotel, where it was packed to the rafters with tired but jubilant fell runners eager to refresh with a pint or two. The surprise lucky winners were; Sue Wilson – Keighley & Craven, Christine Preston – Todmorden, John Griffiths – Preston and 'caveman' Ian Nixon – P&B getting in on the action again, they will all be seen in 2007 wearing some brand spanking new super fast shoes – good running.

'I first started running in 1998, and joined Keighley & Craven AC running club as I had entered the Great North Run and continued to do the odd road race here and there. Knowing quite a few fell-runners I would often go and support at races, but was adamant that I did not want to become a 'Bog Trotter' and much preferred the stability of tarmac! Funny how things change, eight years on I have swapped the Great North Run for the Half Yorkshireman, and the Abbey Dash for races such as the Stoop.

This year was my third Auld Lang Syne race. Speaking to my running friends, Liz Crosland & Margaret Marsden the week before we discussed the terrible weather forecast. My response was 'tough we are still doing it' whatever the weather the Auld Lang Syne is as traditional to local fell runners on New Years Eve as Christmas Dinner is to Christmas. It's all about

taking part and finishing the race to the best of your ability not forgetting trying to beat Spiderman & Batman!
It was a hard run out, mostly uphill and straight into the wind, but luckily no rain. It was great to hit the muddy field, and run straight down to cross the stream without falling. I was wearing Inovate Mudclaw fell shoes, which are excellent in the boggy conditions. Then what a relief to hit the trig point, and have the wind behind you and just let yourself go, eyes totally focused on the uneven path in front and conscious of thundering footsteps right behind you. On the final run in the legs had turned to jelly, and I was convinced lots of people would run past me, but I managed to hold them off and gave it everything I had on the last few yards despite the wind trying to blow me in another direction. Another tough race, but it all melts away when you are chatting in the pub an hour later, and then even better when you win a pair of fell shoes. It's nice for a change that not just the winners get the best prizes.'

Sue Wilson - Keighley & Craven finish time; 70-57

'At the presentation in the pub I was a lucky prize draw winner entitling me to fell shoes, gratis from that fine purveyor of sports goods / accessories Crosstrax !

The organiser asked if I would do a race report / profile of myself as an average runner instead of again profiling the top runners, one of whom and I quote; "doesn't want to see his face yet again publicised as he knows what he looks like." The quote from Dave – the subject – Ian Holmes !

About me; (please don't turn to the results page just yet!) I am 42, a single dad of three teenage boys. Preston born and bred, I run for my local club, "the famous Preston Harriers" as Brendan Foster refers to us on television. I work full time as a driving test examiner in Blackpool. An interesting job – hair-raising even at times.

I started fellrunning age 34 and thoroughly enjoy it even though at times questioning why I do it, particularly during bad races or when going through the pain of finding post injury fitness. I am kept busy looking after my sons, running a house and work so don't have as much time to train as I would like, (that's my excuse and I'm sticking to it), though things are getting easier.

The highlight of my modest fell running career was being Preston's club fell champion 2005, and I consider a top 20 race finish as a personal triumph, something I have achieved only rarely.

I attempted this race on the back of a truly annus horribilis (if Her Majesty can have one – so can I !) including injury after injury, minor op and the lowlight being collapsing at the end of the Paddy's Pole fell race due to infection requiring ambulance, hospital treatment till the early hours and endless subsequent blood tests. At the time, I honestly thought I had breathed my last.

This race then was a chance to exorcise the events of the year. As usual, there was lots of atmosphere, a host of goodies / prizes and an army of runners, most in club kit, some with flamboyant hair styles even superheroes and villains ! All this against the backdrop of a grey December sky. What a contrast !

The race seemed to take in parts of other races, and it was very heavy going in a strong wind, plus was that really spiderman pulling up in front to re-do his shoe lace ?

I finished in the pack 117th position, tired but exhilarated and happy to be racing again. And what an occasion. Where else would you get 450 + runners in great humour on what was a nasty day in t'Yorkshire. Eileen and Dave put a lot of effort into their races and it shows. The post race craic in The Old Sun Hotel was great fun, the free shoes (now gratefully received) being the icing on the cake. Here's to an injury free and race filled 2007, for everyone.'

John Griffiths – Preston Harriers finish time; 54-03

'In the beginning of this article it says " The Auld Lang Syne is not all about racing, but more about socialising and having fun", and I couldn't agree more! That's why I race! The atmosphere, and many friends I've met through racing. For me, this and other Penistone races are even more special as they are just a short walk up the hill from home. The weather is always unpredictable & usually 5 degrees colder than in the valley, and there's always friends to chat with in the registration queue. I try to race all of these races from Penistone Hill - well its home turf and I love running on the Haworth moors any time. At the Auld Lang Syne this year I was lucky to win a pair of new fell shoes in the prize draw – I'll definitely put them to good use over the next 6 months in training for my Bob Graham Round. Cheers Dave & Eileen for putting on such a great series of races and organising this years race on a Sunday so I didn't need to take a day off work!'

Christine Preston – Todmorden Harriers finish time; 59.22

Why not look on www.photos-dsb.co.uk for photo's of the event!