

25th Anniversary of the Durham Dales Challenge report 2014

Another amazing event, congratulations to everyone who took part and a huge thanks to all who volunteered their precious time to marshal at checkpoints, HQ etc including group members, family and friends, Teesdale and Weardale Mountain Rescue Team and Raynet. This being my last year as co-ordinator I could not have wished to have spent a better day amongst friends and competitors alike. There were many wonderful comments received from competitors and volunteers.

The atmosphere was buzzing in Wolsingham High School all day with people coming and going being fed and watered by our amazing chef Paul Ashman, who incidentally cooked at no additional cost to the event, almost 80 portions of his wonderful vegetarian curry and hand-made naan breads, helped by his commis chef, Gordon Barras. The delicious pies, scones and cakes were baked at the local establishment Peggoty's and throughout the afternoon we were serenaded by Jim Arden and his crooners which contributed greatly to the party atmosphere in the hall. Fancy dress was the order of the day from pink tutus to tartan and tiaras, evening wear and butlers to the Cheviot range of amazing overalls, oh and not to forget Santa Claus paying a special visit from Lapland to collect the discs at the bucket drop and somewhere along the way we had a Scotsman cavorting with a monkey...and hey, anything in between.

As it was our 25th Anniversary Clare Jeffray along with her Mum baked and amazingly decorated two huge birthday cakes with the Durham Dales 25th Anniversary badge, huge thanks go to them both; I had the pleasure of cutting said cake.

On the 16 mile route we had our youngest attendee yet, only 9 months old, baby Raymond Bone was smiling when he left in the best seat ever and was laughing when his parents returned with him some hours later. Our oldest attendee was a lady who has walked many of our events, normally the 30 mile route but this year at the age of 79 she decided to retire down to the 16 mile event and completed it in 5hrs 45mins, great effort.

With 286 competitors setting off we had 282 returns; only one retirement from the 16 mile route and three from the 30 mile route. This is the least drop outs in the last 5 years since I have been organising. There was an unusually high amount of people who did not show on the day at 62, no reasons that I can think of why they would wish to miss such an amazing day.

The first male to return on the 16 mile route was in 2hrs 34mins

The first female to return on the 16 mile route was in 3hrs 16mins

The last group home took 7hrs 56mins

The first male to return on the 30 mile route was in 5hrs 24mins

The first female to return on the 30 mile route was in 5hrs 50mins

The last couple home arrived dead on 21.00hrs, very emotional but tears of joy I think, that they had completed in time and collected their well earned anniversary mug and certificate.

In previous years there has been a huge amount of work created by those competitors leaving their entry until the day. This was stopped for the first time in 2012 by using SportIdentmfor online entries, and we have not lost out on entry numbers; it makes administration, catering and

checkpoint preparation much easier and of course leaving the co-ordinators time to sort out any unforeseen queries on the day; no postal entries are being accepted.

The mass start continues to be a good move for organisational / administration reasons but is also a thankful change for the runners; it proves much better for administration purposes and, there were no problems with the checkpoint opening times.

The entry costs increased for 2014 but it was agreed that this raise would be held until 2016. This of course will very much depend on inflation, currently all permits, fuel and checkpoint costs have increased considerably and of course the additional cost of two enrolment costs for Food Hygiene certification, a requirement imposed by Durham County Council.

Fifty pence continues to be donated to Teesdale and Weardale Search & Mountain Rescue Team from each entrant and they received a cheque for £200; a thank you letter was received explaining that the team would use the money to purchase much needed equipment, medical malpractice insurance and the little left over towards their new vehicle fund.

The individual checkpoint items being packed into the storage boxes ready for delivery to the checkpoints saves a great deal of time in set up and clearing away.

Durham Dales 30 mile marshals walk took part on Saturday 14th June 2014 where I completed my last ever Durham Dales Marshals walk on a day that was very warm and muggy but hey no rain or wind a real bonus. Another bonus was that I am the only member to have walked the Anniversary 53, 30 and 16 mile events. However the real highlight of the day for me was that Marjorie Wilkinson, Northumbria Group member was amongst the small group of eight.

Marjorie walked the very first marshals walk back in 1989 when she was just a young slip of a lass and 25 years on, just a little bit older.... and with just a few more miles under her belt Marjorie completed the 25th Anniversary of the Durham Dales 30 marshals walk, the only group member who has and ever will do this! It was an honor and a pleasure to walk with Marjorie and I do hope when I am in the prime of my life I to can walk the distances as well as Marjorie.

Marjorie and her husband Alan have also been the chief cooks and bottle washers at the Middleton in Teesdale checkpoint 5 for the last 25 years, once again a one and only. They started with a car parked in the car park at Middleton, thereafter moved to the Outdoor School for many years until its closure two years ago and for the last couple of years they have settled themselves into the Middleton Village Hall. I only twice visited their checkpoint once as a competitor and once as a sweep and I have to say the home baking was absolutely divine and understand that all the competitors rave about what a fabulous checkpoint. Well done and a huge thanks to Marjorie, Alan and all their helpers over the years.

Best of luck to the Durham Dales going forward into the future; best wishes to all who may compete and volunteer.

Chris McDowell
Durham Dales co-ordinator