

“Beefy’s Nab “ Fell Race – 19th October 2003

Months and months of sunshine with no rainfall came to an end about an hour before the start of this inaugural fell race in memory of Ashley ‘Beefy’ Bevan who sadly died prematurely last year.

After the juniors races were finished, the main race started at 3pm on a newly designed course by Mr Colin Crane. The course tended to ignore anything that looked remotely like a footpath in favour of deep thick grasses, uneven ground and locked gates. Instead of meandering slowly to the summit overlooking Oxenhope, Colin had elected to go for the direct route although he neglected to tell the runners that crampons, ice axes and hard helmets to protect against glacial rockfall would be required.

The race was started at 3pm by Des ‘bad back’ Fretwell with a rather understated ‘off you go then’.



As usual, Willy Smith strode into the lead as the 35 runners and 7 walkers entered the fast reservoir section of the course.



Not satisfied with the pace that Will was setting, Gary Chapman decided to liven Will up by injecting a bit of pace until the reservoir exit was arrived after 400 yards. As we took a tight right hand turn, we encountered the first of Colin Crane's surprises. He had arranged for a rather large and apparently very flustered cow to be standing in the middle of the narrow footpath. As Gary got close to the cow, instead of returning to the field, it got scared and started running up the footpath. Gary lost his courage at this stage when he realised that if the cow could not get out at the other end of the path, it would turn and charge the runners. Will Smith was manhandled into the lead to go and sort the cow out so that the race could continue. As soon as the cow realised that it had a hormonal Will Smith chasing her, she escaped faster than Helen on a Saturday night.

As the ascent started, the field began to spread out until a lot of bedraggled runners were spread across the moor. Despite the course being well marked out, a few unplanned diversions (or 'Fretwell's as they are also known) were made.

Once the runners hit the top, a suicidal descent followed with plenty of potential to create work for the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association, the beneficiaries of the race whose coffers were swelled by £178.22. Fortunately, there were no serious injuries and Willy Smith carried on his run of fine form with a clear victory over Damien Scholes. Battling for third place were Colin Moses and Pete Clark who had an almighty sprint before Colin pipped Pete at the post.

The usual strong performances from Tim Clegg and Johnnie Butler saw them come home in 5th and 6th place respectively. However, this was then followed by the vertically challenged Russell Fairhurst who for the second week running, displayed how much his running had come on.



Next home was Charlie Marshall's dog who had shown a fine turn of speed that Charlie himself has never been able to master. As you can see from the picture below, there is little doubt as to who is looking the fresher.



Unfortunately, the electronic timing system was not working effectively therefore Gary Chapman was awarded 9th place, a mere 0.01 seconds behind Charlie. The position all depended on where Des decided the finishing line was as Gary flew past Charlie but just too late in the eyes of Mr Fretwell (under a promise of extra beer from Charlie). Gary had managed to set the record for the slowest descent as unlike the hardy Yorkshire runners who flew down the hill, he demonstrated a bit of 'soft shandy drinking southerner' when he pussyfooted down the hill.

Soon after, in another impressive performance was John Preston. Seen here, he looks as if he has hardly broken sweat.



Chris Preston was first lady home in 18th place

although a few minutes behind John.

In total 35 runners completed the hilly 3 mile course. We were promised a few surprises and after the cow at the start, the near vertical ascent that Colin had prepared will make the race one to remember for some time.

The Lamb Inn proprietor must still be counting his profits as everybody returned to the pub afterwards for a good drink and the prizegiving. Here we can see the dishevelled Chris Preston trying to hide from the camera.



Master of ceremonies was Brett Weeden who had the pleasure of having to give yet another first prize out to Will Smith. Any suggestions for how to handicap Will at the next race should be sent to Brett.

