

Isle of Man Easter Athletics Festival 2008

By Andrew Duncan

Months of planning and anticipation came to an end on Thursday 20th March. Eighteen Hare and Hounds set off to the magical Isle of Man in search of racing, rivalry and beer. The weekend did not disappoint with excellent results in the racing as well as some great team bonding.

THURSDAY

People travelled in different ways to the Island, by boat, rail, air and car... taking the boat was an interesting option where the gale force winds in the Irish Sea added a level of excitement to the crossing (sadly delaying some journeys). Harriet in particular enjoyed the boat... and that slab of Victoria sponge cake for the second time. Nice.



Arriving an hour late, the tired boat travellers met pioneer Harey Robin Brown who arrived early at Captain Andy Duncan's home (HQ). Some lazy bums took the car journey from the port, but messrs Brown, Mathie, Yu and Pattison were led to HQ on foot by Andy, taking some Manx hills on the way. Soup, cake and tea revived the travellers before sleep...

FRIDAY

Early in the morning four more runners emerged from the Irish Sea unscathed joined by Claire D who flew in from London. The day was spent preparing seriously for the first 10km road race, so numerous cups of tea, sandwiches and cakes were consumed in true Harey style. The Bollywood Film "Lagaan" provided much motivation courtesy of English subtitles.

Bussing it down to Port Erin (down south!), we registered and got warmed up for the race. And we did need some warming up! Despite clear skies, the wind was driving

and I think everyone consumed a fair amount of sand. Most Hareys braved the cold in just vest and shorts though we were let down by some softies.

It was worrying on the start line to be greeted with hail stones, but the precipitation held off for the race. Men and women started together. David Yu led the troops home in 11th place (2nd Junior) in 33:47 followed by Joe Stevick and Andy Duncan (34:53 and 34:54). Joe and Andy worked together for the last quarter of the race, battling local Darren Gray and probably shouting a bit too much encouragement at each other. Notable performances from Pete Davenport and Phil Scard who both broke 38 minutes. The girls raced well too. Claire Day and Polly Keen battled around the course, Keen taking former Club Captain with a kick in the final stages taking the Junior title also. Harriet Owles reluctantly skipped the race with foot issues.

Wrapping up hastily, pizza from a local eatery was warmly welcomed. Arriving in back at HQ, Andy picked up James and Emma who had been stuck in Liverpool for 6 hours!

SATURDAY

Hill race day! Gregor took a small expedition group for a spin around the Island's famous TT Course (yes, they do average 130mph on public roads!) whilst it was surprising to see Harriet, Cat and Polly emerge from sleep BEFORE noon.



Peel Hill race is not for the weak. It consists of a brief run along a harbour before a monstrous ascent up the hill overlooking the ancient Peel Castle. No time to enjoy the view though as you whiz over rocks and bushes and descend back down into Peel central (it is actually a city you know). David Yu again led the Greyhounds in first,

while Phil Scard had a blinder of a race. Robin Brown was second man in for Cambridge, however, overcoming that horrible cough to place 29th in a strong field. Harriet Owles' decision to rest paid off as she made the top 10 in a swift time of 19:21 for the 3 mile course. Emma Figures' first race went exceedingly well, her bounding strides taking her into 34th.



With the race over, it was time for a pint, a trip to the Museum Gift Shop (Tim P wanted to brush up on his Manx) or maybe purchase something from the Kipper Factory. Joe Stevick was so occupied with Peel's attractions that he missed the bus home. Deciding to run home, he got a *bit lost* and wound up 15+ miles in the darkness, and the rescue car with Andy Duncan and Emma Figures could not find him... animal!

Other animals participated in the Peel to Douglas pub crawl. Peel is 10-13 miles from Douglas so not a short crawl, with six pubs en route to re-hydrate weary legs (!). Cambridge was well represented by around ten crawlers, Phil Scard and Claire Day racking up the most drinks and arriving first back in Douglas for their respective genders – awesome.



Mrs Duncan pulled out some special grub in the evening, with numerous salads, a gammon joint and more to replenish energy levels. Then it was time for Disney's "Cool Runnings" for more motivation (like we needed it) and also a bit of a sing-song. It was with weary legs and less sober minds that Hareys went to bed that night!

SUNDAY



Easter Sunday. Fresh blue skies contrasting with the concrete-like legs of those waking up. 5km was still to be faced along the flat, out and back Douglas Promenade. Harriet led the female troops home (19:21), hotly pursued by Claire Day (19:36). The team result from Sunday pulled Greyhounds Ladies into fourth place, a great result on debut. Podium result next time!



For the men, the 5km was in a relay format in teams of 4. David Yu, Andy Duncan and Pete Davenport took off in Cambridge Light Blue. Yu and Duncan worked in the leading pack, which stuck together until the 2.5km turning point, before breakaways from former Harey and Alehouse deserter Daz Talbot and others. Yu clocked 16:03, Duncan very happy with a 5km PB of over 30 seconds (16:15)!

Joes Stevick (Greyhounds B) also clocked a sub 17min leg. But fastest (and freshest) legs from Tim Pattison saw him smash the 16min barrier (15:39). Having not been able to race on Friday and Saturday due to England international duties, Pattison unleashed his frustration taking Greyhounds A into 4th place on the day.



Sunday afternoon saw some chilling out and for once we had to do some cooking as Mr and Mrs Duncan had left on holiday. Then it was getting ready for some of the Prize Presentation, Party and Infamous Beer Racing!!



Quite a few people got prizes; David, Polly, Robin, Tim for the U20 youthful efforts. Other prizes nearly included an Orange tank-top kindly donated by Alehouse but subsequently withdrawn. Polly did acquire stash from Nottingham University. Andy's hopes of converting an Edinburgh Hare and Hounds Team banner ** found ** at BUSA XC for other Edinburgh Hare and Hounds goodies similarly failed.

Success at beer racing was impressive, however. The Greyhounds men made it to the quarter-finals, equalling England's performances under Sven Goren Eriksson's reign. Phil's leadership and downing skills were invaluable. The girls faced stiff and experienced competition, only making it through one round, I think...

Round	Phil	Rich	Pete	Gregor	Total
Trials	6.17	8.27	9.53	8.01	31.98
Heats	5.46	7.98	9.60	8.85	31.89
1/4s	5.46	8.00	9.57	7.75	30.78
(ave.)	5.70	8.08	9.57	8.20	31.55
Ladies	Polly	Claire	Harriet	Cat	Total
Trials	11.61	13.15	14.13	12.32	51.21

Overall, a fantastic weekend bringing together the best parts of university running; racing, beer and banter. I hope to see hords of pink shirts for years to come and many Pinks and Half-Pinks awarded... (see below criteria and this year's rewards)

****PINKS COMMITTEE****. The Committee (formed by past Club Captains who have been to IOM Festival for Cambridge/Greyhounds i.e. Andy and Claire at the mo) can award Half Pinks and Full Pinks for feats of "athletic" ability during the Easter Weekend.

The criteria for a Full Pink:

**Complete all three races (10km, 3-4mile hill race, 5km)*

**Finish the Peel-Douglas pub crawl (10-13miles + 6 pubs)*

**Compete in beer racing*

The criteria for a Half Pink:

**Complete in all three races OR*

**Compete in beer racing and advance through least three rounds (quarter-final) OR*

**Come top 15 (top 10 for women) in one race OR*

**Other animalistic behaviour which will be judged at committee's discretion*

As such, I am pleased to award Full Pinks to:

Claire Day, Phil Scard, Rich Mathie, Gregor McCombie, Pete Davenport

And Half Pinks: Polly Keen, Cat Mactier, Andrew Duncan, David Yu, Robin Brown, Tim Pattison, Oli Jones, Aidan Brown and Joe Stevick (who ran 15 miles home in dark after missing bus).