

Mynyddwyr De Cymru

Newsletter – January 2006

Editorial:

Probably the best
independent fell
running club in the
world

www.mdcwales.org

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Things seem to have been quiet on the fell running front over the last three months or so; just the winter league races giving us an excuse to get out on the hills. However, the New Year is upon us and I've now received calendars from the FRA and the WFRA. There's lots of races; old classics and new or resurrected ones to tempt us out again. Personally, my running performances peaked in the first half of last year and I can't see myself doing so well this season. Commuting to a new job (and no longer having enough time to run during lunch) has made training really quite difficult, especially during the darker evenings. But perhaps I'll be inspired by some insane challenge and really make the effort to get back out there!

I'm still aiming to produce four newsletters a year; in January, April, July and October so keep the reports, pictures and articles coming. Let's not have to rely on Mr and Mrs Greybeard for it all - even though they do produce very fine stuff!

Well, that's all my whingeing for now. Happy New Year and all the best for fell racing and running in 2006.

Rhys

Club news:

John Sweeting informs me that he will shortly be writing to all members and asking for this years subscriptions. It'll be £5 yet again – what a bargain! John does mention that a prompt response would make his life much easier. So sit by that letterbox please, fell runners.

Also, if you're not a member of WFRA, John has WFRA 2006 race calendars available for £2.00. Contact him on LowerLodge@phonecoop.coop or 01550 721086

The Bob Smith Traverse (16/8/05) – By John Aggleton

It seemed that the first and possibly greatest part of the challenge was to get to the start at Llanddeusant on time! 10.00 am shouldn't be that hard. As it was, I had time to jump out of the car, pose for Kay's camera, and then set off up the track in the company of a small but highly select group of runners attempting to cover the six 800m peaks in south Wales by walking, running and cycling in any combination and route as personally preferred. The only constraints were the start point, the finish in the Grwyne valley and the fact that the support (in my case Jane – many thanks, again) needed to be in the right place for the changeovers (in previous years this has gone horribly wrong for some participants.)

So, a few minutes after 10.00 I set off with Martin (OGB), Douglas, and Phil Holder (Harlequins). Some time earlier that morning the eponymous Bob S. and his much younger colleague (Mike, a mere stripling at 63) had also started the trek. I blame having only just got out of the car for fact that I started by trying to go up the wrong mountain! As only Fan Brycheiniog in the Black Mountain is over 800m, my initial attempt to plough straight up the north slope of Bannau Sir Gaer was both novel and spectacularly dumb. I heard noises behind me (which I assumed were sheep) – they turned out to be Phil and Martin shouting and pointing to the Bwlch between Bannau Sir Gaer and Fan Brycheiniog (Thanks guys!). As a consequence we reached the north slope of Fan Brycheiniog close together, though Phil was already crocked as he had gone over on his ankle (He made it to Storey Arms but had to give up there). By the time we had climbed to the Bwlch, Douglas had disappeared into the mist some way in front. We trekked over to the Trig Point and began one of the joys of the BST – the fact that you can speed down off the Black Mountain using the same route as the Transfan, but with the prospect of a bike ride to come and not the un-named ridge etc etc. Somewhere coming down I saw Douglas'

distinctive white cycle helmet as he set off on the next stage down the road – never to be seen again I assumed.

The cycle from the River Tawe to the Storey Arms should be relatively straight forward but in 2004 my son Hugh had two punctures on this section, (ruining any chance of a half decent time) while in 2002 I was nearly wiped out by a sheep on the fastest descent on the route (grid ref. 917232 – you have been warned). This time it was a black dog that leapt out of a drive just as I was descending a very steep, winding drop – apparently it managed to scare every rider in the same way, so at least it

had a grand day. After the pull up the A470 it was a case of trying to refuel while slogging up the toilet track.

The tops of the Beacons were covered in dense cloud, which meant that the climbs up Duwynt, Corn Du and Pen y Fan felt rather detached. To add to this feeling was the fact that i) I was stopped by a walker coming SW off Corn Du

asking me where Pen y Fan was - all I could say was "It's behind you", and ii) the sight of the eponymous Bob (who I had apparently caught up with) running in the *opposite* direction to me – this is another of the joys of the BST – the fact that you can take any route you like, in any order, and no two years have been the same for me. We greeted each other, then rapidly disappeared into the cloud not to see each other for some hours.

I was really looking forward to the descent off Pen y Fan down to Cwm Gwdi. Let's face it, its down hill all the way (almost) and should be a doddle. Alas, it was not to be. For the first time during the day I felt really exhausted and my thighs started cramping, forcing me to walk sections I should have been flying down. I made it to the car park where I rushed through a quick bite and got back on the bike. Jane told me that Douglas was not only quite a few minutes ahead of me but he was taking a far more refined (and more relaxed) attitude to the

Bob Smith Traverse route			
	Location	Grid ref.	Alt. (m)
Start	Llanddeusant	SN 798238	273
1	Fan Brycheiniog	SN 825218	802
2	Duwynt	SO 005207	824
3	Corn Du	SO 007213	873
4	Pen y Fan	SO 012215	886
5	Waun Fach	SO 215299	811
6	Pen y Gadair Fawr	SO 229287	800
Finish	Grwyne Fawr	SO 252285	407
Approximately 77km, 23 of which is on foot.			

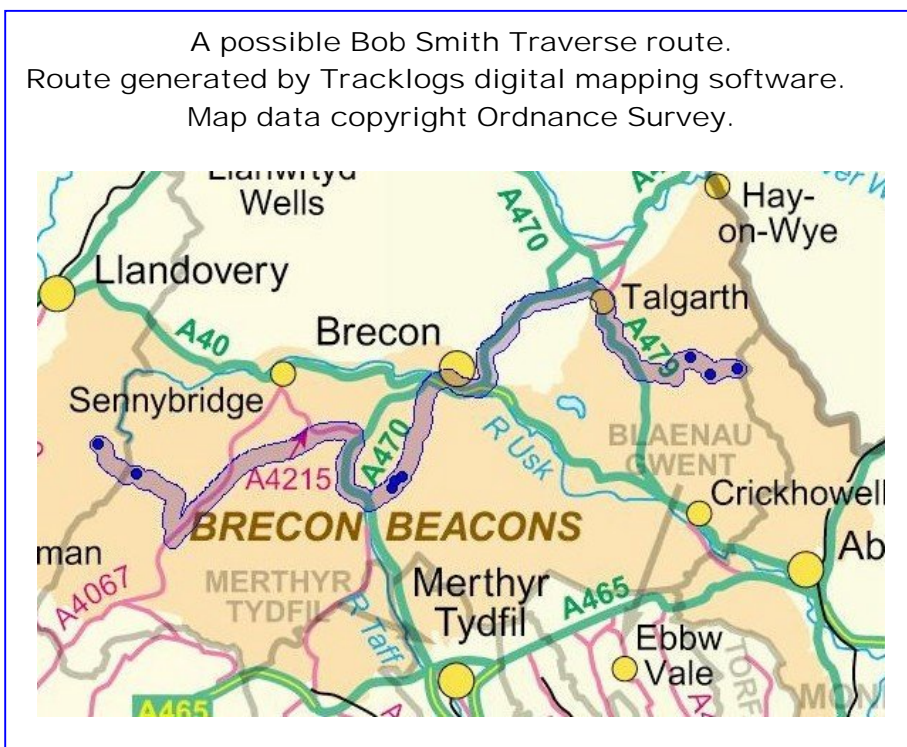
change overs (at this point I imagined him being brought buttered scones while he sat down and waited for his tea to brew).

The next section to the Black Mountains hinges on the decision of whether to take the shorter, but hillier route via Llangorse or whether to go through Brecon and rely on the faster roads and a following wind. I had still not made my mind up when I reached Cwm Gwdi, but as soon as I got on my bike one of my thighs cramped up forcing me to cycle with one leg. This made the choice for me, as the Brecon route allowed me quite a long gentle descent and a chance for my leg to recover, while the back roads route starts with a quick climb. So it was Brecon, where I nearly ran over a pedestrian who was not looking in the right direction as he crossed the main road (or just maybe I went through a red light). The A road proved very fast, but after Bronllys there is a long, slow pull up to Pengenfford and all the time you find yourself thinking that the other route must have been a lot quicker. The only obstacle was a Rolls Royce that had stopped to pick up a bridegroom and had blocked the narrow direct lane up from Talgarth.

My goal was the junction at grid ref 186290, for the last running leg. When I got there I was amazed to find that I had caught up with Douglas. I think Jane was even more amazed and was totally unprepared for my arrival. (She remained in a dazed state and tried to drive off without my bike!) I would like to think that my cycling prowess was responsible for catching up with Douglas, but it was really due to Douglas' decision to have a siesta at every change over! Very generously, Douglas waited and let me tag along with him up onto the ridges of the Black Mountains. By this time I had completely overdosed on jelly babies and swore I would never eat another one. We reached Waun Fach together, but during the saturated slog over to Pen y Gadair Fawr I pulled ahead.

The final descent into the Grwyne valley should be a fast, furious plunge (notwithstanding cramp). There was, however, one last pitfall. The lower slopes are covered in bracken and the correct path can be almost impossible to find – on both previous BSTs I had missed the path causing untold grief in deep bracken. This time Douglas (who had, of course, caught me up) made sure we found the path. Very generously he let me lead as we dropped down to the river – so technically I might finish first. I still, however, managed to fluff the end, and crossed the river just behind Douglas in a time of 5.24. (My goal had been to beat my previous best of 5.59 – so I was delighted). We had also beaten our support so we took a quick plunge in the river – where I slipped, incurring my only lasting injury of the day. OGB (6.04) and Bob S. (a little under 8 hours) followed in good order and we celebrated in customary MDC style with a mixture of champagne and an excess of refined carbohydrates (thanks Kay).

The BST is another grand day out courtesy of MDC productions, so if you want to see the very best South Wales has to offer in just a few hours give it a go next year. For the over 50s 5:24 is now the time to beat – but this is a long way off Tom Gibb's record of 4:36, while the Vets record is 5:20 (Phil Holder). So far there is no woman's time – so 2006 must be the year.



A View From The Top – By Kay Lucas

Sometimes I think I'm a rain-goddess. Any passing cloud seems destined to visit my checkpoint. It's not always like that of course. I've marshalled on crisp days, mellow days, days with the air hung thick with pollen, autumn days so achingly beautiful that I never want to come down – but mostly there's rain. Marshalling fell races requires dedication, a love of bad weather and at least a soupcon of insanity. For me at least the rewards are enormous.

There's always time to look around. Have you ever noticed how varied the vegetation is? How many species of bird visit the mountains? Tracks on the earth (that don't come from fell shoes)? Time to listen to the myriad insects in the summer, the muted bark of a dog in a far off farmyard, the wind rustling the leaves. Often there is silence broken only, finally, by the sound of footsteps and heavy breathing as the runners come by.

My chosen attire as a marshal is a yellow 'blob' suit: council-issue gear of voluminous proportions - big enough to cover a samurai. Clad in the jaundice fat-suit, I can usually be seen through the most murky clag. Another effect of this garment of officialdom is that people usually obey your commands without question. "Up here! What's your number! Follow the flags!" No-one ever argues. In a recent race I counted six too many. On reflection, I realised that a group of runners had looked slightly bemused and were chatting in German. Perhaps they thought that all mountains in Wales had someone on top

hectoring them – or maybe that's how it's done in Bavaria.

You meet all kinds of people on top of mountains: the inquisitive (is this a race?), the informative (this is the only place in Britain where you can see this variety of moss), the lost (how far is it to Pen y Fan?) – a long way, you're in the Black Mountains. I've been asked if you can see Devon from Bannau Sir Gaer (yes on a good day) or Ireland from the Garth (tentative grasp of geography there I fear). You get an extraordinary variety of footwear on show – from waders to a pair of gold sandals that would not look out of place at the Queen's garden party. How on earth did she manage to walk in them!

The main reason for marshalling is to assist the runners. Runners are fantastic. The days when runners were rude to marshals have gone (or maybe said runners have been gently rolled down the mountain). That said, you can get some odd replies to the request "number please". "Can't read it. I wrote it on upside down". "Yes it's a fine day". "I make it 12:35". It's all there on the top: the strange, the banal, the surprising the mundane. Much of life wanders by, stops for a chat and moves on again. The mountains differ but the view is the same – people trying to achieve their personal goal and have fun at the same time. So I'll keep on plodding up and taking numbers. Anything to help along the little bit of insanity that spices up a sanitised world. And yes – I like the rain.

A message / late news from Martin Lucas

Many of our older members will remember Les Williams, a founder member of MDC and Chairman of the club up to and during the Reservoir relay tragedy. Les moved away to north Wales shortly after that and we have lost touch over recent years, but we have recently heard via John Darby that he has been involved in a very serious accident whilst out on his bike.

I have been in touch with Ysbyty Gwynedd in Bangor where Les has been since mid December, and apart from various broken bones he has suffered several fractures to the skull which have resulted in internal bleeding. He is making a very slow recovery and is now able to walk and speak slowly but his partner Hilary advised me that he is not well enough to talk on the phone

and has short term memory problems. He is likely to remain in hospital for a while yet and it sounds as though recovery may take some time.

I have passed on the best wishes of MDC for a full recovery. If anyone wants an update or to get in touch he is in the Glaslyn Ward, Ysbyty Gwynedd, Bangor (01248 384384).

PS he wasn't wearing a helmet - lesson to all of us who cycle.

Looking forwards:

Anyone who's a member of FRA or WFRA should've received a calendar by now, so I won't repeat full race details here. Also, the remaining Winter League dates were given in the last newsletter. However; Some dates for your diary:

Saturday 18th March 2006: WLIAD – Winter League in a day. A non-competitive running challenge over the courses of the 7 Winter League races. You're responsible for your own well-being (physical and mental) on this one. ie. "Transfan rules" apply. Details from Martin Lucas 01656 880009 or greybeard@chestnutview.freeserve.co.uk

Saturday 25th March 2006: MDC Annual General Meeting. In the pub at Llanbedr after the Pen Cerrig Calch race. Vote for the committee or perhaps volunteer yourself!

Tuesday evenings 2006: When the evenings get light again, MDC will be out training. Martin would be pleased to receive ideas for suitable running venues across the region to help him prepare a schedule before March. Let him know. Contact details above.



2006 Championships – See the WFRA calendar for more details.

Welsh Open. 4 out of 6 races to count.		
Sun 18th June	Blaengwynfi	(Medium)
Sun 25th June	Pumlumon	(Short)
Sat 29th July	Y Garn	(Short)
Sat 19th August	Brecon Beacons	(Long)
Sat 21st October	Rhinog Horseshoe	(Long)
Sun 5th November	Clwydian Hills	(Medium)

South Wales Summer Series. 4 out of 7 races to count		
Sun 14th May	Sarn Helen	(Long)
Sun 28th May	Mynydd Troed	(Medium)
Sun 18th June	Blaengwynfi	(Medium)
Sun 25th June	Pumlumon	(Short)
Sun 9th July	Callow	(Short)
Mon 28 th August	Machen	(Medium)
Sun 10th September	Llyn y Fan	(Short)

Results:

Note: only MDC members listed in the results tables here. For full results, consult the internet or the race organiser.

Karrimor International Mountain Marathon 29th/30th October 2005.

Up on the Eastern Fells of the Lake District, Alice Bedwell and nephew Alex competed in the C class coming 20th. Also in that class, Dave Gilbert and Cledwyn Jones came 183rd. Meanwhile, Mark Saunders and John Darby finished 15th out of 52 finishing pairs in the A class. Well done all of you – sorry if I've not mentioned you. I couldn't wade through the pages of results searching for MDC names!

Table Mountain AS 4.2miles/1210feet. 5th November 2005.

An excellent turnout, especially from MDC, on a wet and windy day over this new course. The run in and out to the open mountain on tracks and footpaths was surprisingly technical and great fun – especially the section that had a river running down it! Mark Palmer flew all the way round to win in 31:25.

Table Mountain results			
Posn.	Name	Cat.	Time
3	Tom Gibbs	SM	33.07
4	Patrick Wooddisse	SM	33.41
12	Mark Saunders	M40	35.58
18	Douglas Adlam	SM	37.53
22	Mark Bryant	M40	38.24
24	John Aggleton	M50	38.34
27	Rhys Williams	SM	41.06
28	Martin Warren	SM	41.07
31	Steve Brown	M50	42.05
32	Andrew Blackmore	SM	42.20
34	Peter Burne	SM	43.15
35	Chris Thomas	M50	43.24
36	Martin Lucas	M50	44.14
37	John Sweeting	M50	44.59
41	John Shanahan	M40	46.34
42	Gary Davies	M40	46.45
43	Tim Jones	SM	48.44
46	Paul Ormerod	M50	50.10
47	Cledwyn Jones	M60	50.11
49	Glenn Roberts	SM	51.16
52	John Darby	M50	51.50
53	Dave Gilbert	M50	53.00
54	John Battersby	M70	56.35
55	Les Pugh	M50	57.28
57 finish			

Ras Rhobell Fawr AM 6miles/1900feet. 12th November 2005.

Ras Rhobell Fawr results			
Posn.	Name	Cat.	Time
14	Dan Booth	SM	0:59:21
21	John Syms	SM	1:00:34
57	Martin Lucas	M50	1:11:23
63	John Sweeting	M50	1:13:27
80 finish			

All eyes were on this race, the final round of the inaugural WFRA Championship. Dan Booth performed well, but couldn't hold his lead on the table as other runners put in their fourth and final race (See the championship results on page 8).

Abergwynfi AS 3.5miles/1300feet. 26th November 2005.

Thanks to all who braved the snow, especially Kay and Derek on the mountain and Sarah and Benjy at the finish. Due to icy conditions on the 'bunny' climb a slightly shorter route was taken direct to the summit of Mynydd Caerau, which with thick snow all the way was testing enough for most runners. For those with time to look around the views were spectacular with snow covered hills in all directions – on days like these Abergwynfi deserves its reputation as the Jewel of the Valleys.

Despite the sub-zero conditions there was a good race at the sharp end, with Matt Collins closing down Mark Palmer all the way back from the summit but without quite enough distance to catch him. Perhaps if Uncle Benjy had driven Matt to the start with a little more time to spare things may have been different?

Special thanks are due to our new host in the Great Western, Saif, who being a runner himself managed to judge the voracious appetites of Winter Leaguers

correctly with a vast spread of sandwiches. Perhaps he can be persuaded to have a go himself next year.

The Winter League now goes into hibernation for a few weeks but we hope to see you all at the Kymin race on 14th January.

Old Greybeard

Abergwynfi results				
Posn:	Name	Cat:	Time	
2	Matthew Collins	SM	26:08	
3	Pat Wooddisse	SM	27:32	
7	Doug Adlam	SM	29:29	
9	Mark Bryant	M40	31:20	
13	John Darby	M50	33:05	1 st M50
14	Steve Brown	M50	33:23	
17	Chris Thomas	M50	34:46	
18	Peter Burne	SM	35:08	
19	Martin Lucas	M50	35:15	
20	Tim Jones	SM	40:20	
21	Glen Roberts	SM	41:03	
22	Dave Gilbert	M50	41:11	
23	Cledwyn Jones	M65	43:36	1 st M65
24	Les Pugh	M50	46:13	
25	John Battersby	M70	47:14	1 st M70
25 finish				

Merthyr Mawr 10K Multi-terrain Christmas Pudding Race. 18th December 2005

From the race details: "The Christmas Pudding 10k is a challenging multi-terrain one-lap course starting at Europe's biggest sand dune, the Big Dipper. ...The run starts at the bottom of the Big Dipper (approx 245m vertical climb on soft sand)," **TRUE or FALSE?** See page 12 for the answer.

Merthyr Mawr Christmas pudding results				
Posn.	Name	Cat.	Time	
25	Mark Saunders	M40	41:00	
46	John Aggleton	M50	42:45	
68	Rhys Manning	SM	44:28	
85	Alan Stone	M40	45:40	
110	Martin Lucas	M50	47:06	
112	Alice Bedwell	F40	47:10	
294	Derek Thornley	M50	56:42	
463	William Darby	M50	1:10:30	
507 finish				



John Darby at Merthyr Mawr.
Photo courtesy of Dave Weeden,
www.lescroupiersrunningclub.org.uk

**WFRA Open Championship 2005. 265 runners completed at least one race. 29 MDC members completed at least one race.
Overall winner: Crispin Flower, Mynydd Du.**

Posn.	Name	Cat	Llanbedr - Blaenafon		Llangynhafal Loop		Foel Fras		Waun Fach		Fan Fawr		Rhobell Fawr		Total
			Time	Score	Time	Score	Time	Score	Time	Score	Time	Score	Time	Score	
5	Dan Booth	SM	163.18	87.85	44.38	84.10	116.30	86.74	62.48	84.48	21.40	84.51	59.21	87.01	346.11
6	John Syms	SM	186.36	71.85					63.59	82.30	21.01	87.97	60.34	84.69	326.82
9	Patrick Wooddisse	SM	151.57	95.65					54.16	100.18	18.42	100.32			296.15
16	Andrew Darby	M40	178.59	77.08					61.46	86.38	21.32	85.22			248.68
40	Adrian Moir	M40			54.54	57.44	149.59	54.19	81.00	51.00					162.63
42	John Darby	M50							65.50	78.90	22.21	80.86			159.76
48	Dick Finch	M50	185.50	72.38					69.24	72.34					144.72
52	Martin Lucas	M50									24.10	71.18	71.23	64.10	135.28
56	John Sweeting	M50									24.25	69.85	73.27	60.17	130.01
64	Matthew Collins	SM							52.12	103.98					103.98
75	Gareth Craft	SM									18.56	99.08			99.08
93	Douglas Adlam	SM									20.45	89.39			89.39
95	Julian Carter	SM	161.35	89.03											89.03
97	Rhys Williams	SM	162.05	88.69											88.69
100	Tom Gibbs	SM	163.38	87.62											87.62
116	Mark Bryant	M40									21.28	85.57			85.57
119	Eric Meredith	M60							87.31	39.02	28.55	45.86			84.88
121	John Aggleton	M50									21.46	83.97			83.97
135	Peter Burne	SM									22.36	79.53			79.53
159	Ken Jones	M40							68.23	74.21					74.21
168	Chris Thomas	M50									24.03	71.80			71.80
180	David Malatynski	M50							71.21	68.75					68.75
186	Alwyn Nixon	M50	194.05	66.71											66.71
193	Steve Brown	M50									25.13	65.58			65.58
225	Dave Gilbert	M50							81.10	50.70					50.70
228	Robert West	M60	219.10	49.49											49.49
240	Cledwyn Jones	M60							88.54	36.47					36.47
250	Gareth Buffett	M50							92.55	29.08					29.08
252	John Battersby	M70									33.04	23.74			23.74

WFRA South Wales Summer 2005. 281 runners completed at least one race. 33 MDC members completed at least one race.

Overall winner: Geoff Oldrid, Aberystwyth AC

Pos.	Name	Cat.	Coity		Guto Nyth Bran		Waun Fach		Ras Beca		Machen		Llyn y Fan		Fan Fawr		Total
			Time	Score	Time	Score	Time	Score	Time	Score	Time	Score	Time	Score	Time	Score	
2	John Darby	MV50	51.10	70	52.33	83	65.50	79			52.32	76	59.12	85	22.21	81	327
4	Matthew Collins	MS			42.38	105	52.12	104			39.44	106					315
11	Patrick Wooddisse	MS					54.16	100							18.42	100	200
13	Gareth Craft	MS											52.07	98	18.56	99	198
14	Julian Carter	MS			47.46	94							49.51	103			196
16	Douglas Adlam	MS											48.54	105	20.45	89	194
19	Rhys Williams	MS	46.11	82					42.24	88							170
20	John Syms	MS					63.59	82							21.01	88	170
21	Dan Booth	MS					62.48	84							21.40	85	169
27	Andy Stott	MV40	47.17	80							53.45	73					152
28	Ken Jones	MV40					68.23	74			51.31	78					152
29	Martin Lucas	MV50											63.51	76	24.10	71	147
33	David Malatynski	MV40					71.21	69			55.37	68					137
35	Eric Meredith	MV60					87.31	39					75.54	52	28.55	46	137
37	John Sweeting	MV50							50.17	67					24.25	70	137
49	Dave Gilbert	MV50	58.27	51			81.10	51									102
53	Mark Saunders	MV40	39.28	100													100
69	Dai Richards	MV40											55.06	93			93
87	Cledwyn Jones	MV60	58.12	52			88.54	36									88
101	Mark Bryant	MV40													21.28	86	86
108	John Aggleton	MV50													21.46	84	84
119	Peter Burne	MS													22.36	80	80
122	Alice Bedwell	FV40	47.25	79													79
136	Norman Jones	MV40	48.42	76													76
157	Dick Finch	MV60					69.24	72									72
158	Chris Thomas	MV50													24.03	72	72
166	Andrew Blackmore	MS									55.02	70					70
174	Tim Jones	MS			59.14	68											68
177	Les Pugh	MV50	64.09	37							71.45	30					67
188	Steve Brown	MV50													25.13	66	66
201	John Battersby	MV70											82.50	39	33.04	24	62
223	Adrian Moir	MV40					81.00	51									51
256	Gareth Buffett	MV50					92.55	29.08									29

OBUDU MOUNTAIN RACE, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA - NO WAHALA - BY NICKY PULMAN

Obudu Mountain, located in the north of Cross River State, Nigeria, West Africa, hosted a mountain race – the first of its kind - on 27th November 2005. The race up Obudu Mountain was 11 km long on a metalled road, rising to over 1700 metres with many hairpin bends.

Over 400 runners took part in the race, hoping to win the \$50,000 first prize and several lesser cash prizes. 8 international runners attended the race including Jonathon Wyatt (NZ) World Champion. Nigerian runners took the second and fourth places with an Italian taking third place. Other incentives for the race included first woman (\$1500) second woman (\$1000) and third woman (\$500). A Nigerian woman came in fifth overall and took the women's first prize. There were also special prizes of \$1500 for 50th place, 100th place and 150th place. According to Donald Duke, the Governor of Cross River State, the Obudu Mountain Race gave the highest cash prizes for mountain racing in the world.

The race was opened by Mr. Danny Hughes, the President of the World Mountain Running Association. Mr. Hughes visited Obudu Mountain in September 2005 to inspect the facilities provided for the international event. William Archibong, Local Organising Committee Chairman, Obudu Mountain Challenge noted that the race was part of the efforts of Governor Donald Duke to re-brand Cross River State and make it a destination of choice for tourists world wide.

When I first heard about the Obudu Mountain race my instant thought was "no wahala"*. Being from South Wales, I used to jog with my mother, Linda Marshall, around the lanes of the Vale of Glamorgan and was therefore used to the odd hill or two. My mother has known Kay and Martin, who are old family friends. They even sponsored part of the costs of my initial trip to Nigeria. They are big supporters of my work in West Africa.

Having lived in West Africa since 1998 and been in Nigeria for about 3 years, I was fairly well adapted to the tropical climate and high humidity associated with rainforest regions of West Africa. However, I was not nearly as prepared for the 11km run up a very steep hill in the heat of the day. Even though the race started at 8am, the temperature was soaring.



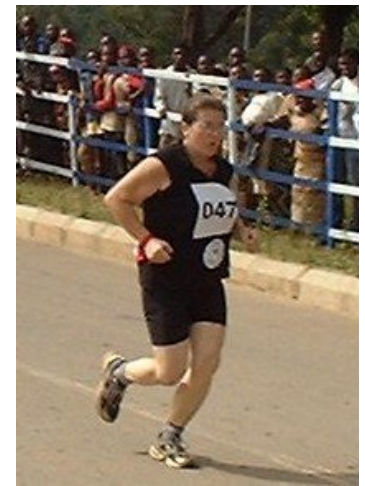
Approximate location of Obudu Mountain marked with a cross.
Map courtesy of graphicmaps.com

The race, started by Danny Hughes, was hard going but the views were spectacular and the atmosphere very exciting. Many people had set their dreams on taking home the big \$50,000, which is a large fortune in Nigeria (poverty is widespread in rural and urban Nigeria). As for myself, I was running on behalf of CERCOPAN, a primate rehabilitation and rainforest conservation non-governmental organisation based in Calabar in the south of Cross River State. I raised about 150,000 naira, which converts to about £600, from friends and colleagues, all the proceeds going towards the development of a new nature trail for education purposes at our forest camp of Rhoko.

I had trained for a few months in advance although this was the first mountain race I had ever entered. Despite the heat and the high humidity, I managed a time of 1 hour 32 minutes, coming in 208th. Not bad for a first attempt at mountain racing, but I'll never be Zola.

The State Government tried hard to make this race a success even though not all the facilities were completed in time. However, I was disappointed to learn that the international runners stayed up at the Obudu Ranch Resort Hotel at the top of the mountain with excellent facilities, whilst all the Nigerian runners (and myself as I consider myself a local Calabar girl) stayed at the Utanga Safari Lodge at the bottom of the mountain which was only partly finished. By this I mean there were no beds, no water or proper toilet facilities for one of the mornings and the conditions were very cramped and uncomfortable. Surely this type of segregation is a thing of the past? My Nigerian co-worker, Eme, also ran for CERCOPAN and we both received our certificates but unfortunately no medals (only

for the first 80 places). I was grateful to have a few supporters to cheer me in particularly the Director of CERCOPAN, Zena Tooze, who was perhaps a little disappointed that I didn't get the first prize – but there is always next year.



Nicky finishing
Obudu Mountain race

*“No Wahala” is a common expression you will hear everywhere in Nigeria. It is Pidgin English for “no problem”.

If you want to see the full results, checkout www.obuduranchmountainrace.com or www.crossriverstate.com

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON CERCOPAN

1. ABOUT CERCOPAN:

CERCOPAN is dedicated to primate conservation through the rehabilitation of endangered primates, environmental education, forest protection, and research. CERCOPAN's Director Zena Tooze, founded the project in 1994 -1995. Based in Calabar, Cross River State, CERCOPAN is now a nongovernmental non-profit organisation with charity registration in process in Nigeria and in the UK. A 6-member board of Trustees guides the policy and direction of the organisation. CERCOPAN employs 30 National staff including a Senior Education Officer, Operations Manager and Community Programme Officer. In addition, self-funded expatriate volunteers come for 1 to 2 years, and offer a variety of expertise for training local staff, including engineering, veterinary nursing, fundraising, biological research and environmental education.

2. BACKGROUND:

CERCOPAN is located in Cross River State, one of 36 states in Nigeria on the border with Cameroon. In terms of biodiversity, the most important state in the country. Nigeria has lost over 90% of its rainforests and more than half of the remaining 10% is found within Cross River State. These forests, along with those in Southwest Cameroon are collectively known as the “Cross River Rainforests”, regarded as one of Africa's 5 forest biodiversity hotspots. The unique nature of Cross River State tropical forest is due in part, to its high annual rainfall of over 4000mm and relatively short dry season. Consequently this forest together with that immediately adjacent in South West Cameroon is classified as the only true evergreen rainforest in Africa. Over 60% of Nigeria's endangered plant and animal species are found only within these forests. These include 132 tree species listed by the World Conservation Monitoring Centre as

globally threatened. Of the 6000 plant species that grow in these forests, many are unique to this part of Africa and as many as 200 species have been recorded from a single 0.06ha plot, a diversity matched only in exceptionally rich sites in South America. The fauna of these forests is also exceptionally rich. With well over 1,000 species recorded for example, these forests are far richer in butterflies than any other part of Africa. Apart

from butterflies, the invertebrate fauna is little known but is thought to be extremely rich. The area is also a centre of endemism for frogs, birds and four primates, including the recently described and highly endangered Cross River Gorilla subspecies (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*), the drill forest baboon (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*) and two guenon monkeys (*Cercopithecus preusii* and *Cercopithecus erythrotis*).

Late results: Kymin Race AS 3.5miles/900feet. 14th January 2006– By Rod Jones

51 Athletes, including 9 from Monmouth, took part in the Kymin Winter Race organised for Les Croupiers Running Club by Rod Jones, on Saturday 14th January. A beautiful winter's afternoon with bright sunshine greeted them at Monmouth Boy's School Sports Centre where pre-race registration was held. The race started in the lane near the Mayhill pub and climbed through the Kymin's woodland paths to just short of the top before descending through more footpaths to the bottom of Wyesham Lane. Forest of Dean Athletic Club member Mark Palmer was already setting the pace together with Welsh International Mountain runner Matt Collins from Pontypool. These two, together with Monmouth runner Dave Finn, had set such a cracking pace from the start that all thoughts about following the taped route were firmly behind the thoughts of racing each other. They missed the final part of the first climb and gained about 4 minutes. The rest of the field were now quite spread out for the long muddy climb up Wyesham Lane to Cockshoot Ash Barn and then through the fields to reach the Tower on top of the Kymin. Not many took time to admire the view across to the Black Mountains but now concentrated on the descent through fields to Beaulieu Wood and down the track to the reservoir and the finish in Mayhill Lane. Mark Palmer had got it by just 4 seconds from Matt Collins. Next across the line was Dave Finn with Patrick Wooddisse first finisher to follow the correct taped course. Mike Duxbury was 20 seconds behind Patrick. Jessica Turnbull of Cheltenham Harriers dominated the ladies

race, finishing in 11th place overall. Steve Brown, was best over 50 with Dick Finch from Chepstow best over 60. The ladies' over 40 category was taken by Alice Bedwell and Monmouth runner Sue Ashton was best over 50. The age spread of runners was, unusually, more under 40 runners than over 40. A happy situation if our sport is to grow. The youngest runner was 14 and the oldest 70. There were 11 lady runners. The potentially difficult situation with the leaders "short cut" was resolved amicably with all athletes involved accepting that an addition of 4 minutes to their finishing times (marked *) would make the final result a fair reflection of their race-day performance.

Kymin Race results				
Posn.	Name	Cat.	Time	
2	Matthew Collins	SM	30:42*	
3	Patrick Wooddisse	SM	31:21	
8	Gareth Craft	SM	34:26	
9	Mark Saunders	M40	35:00	
10	Mark Bryant	M40	35:09	
16	Steve Brown	M50	36:09	
20	Andy Stott	M40	37:54	
22	Alice Bedwell	F40	38:00	1 st F40
25	Dick Finch	M60	39:12	1 st M60
27	Rhys Williams	SM	39:16	
29	John Shanahan	M60	40:08	
35	Martin Lucas	M50	42:22	
37	Helen Bennett	SF	43:27	
44	Eric Meredith	M60	47:39	
48	Lynne Handley	F50	52:26	
50	Les Pugh	M50	53:10	
51 finish				

TRUE or FALSE from page 7

It's FALSE of course! As we all know, the highest sand dune in Europe is The Dune de Pilat, at 105m high, on the French Atlantic Coast. Sadly, the Big Dipper is only about 60m high – still bloody difficult to run up though.

