

Jack Bloor Race Report

10th May 2022

Held on Ilkley Moor this classic 8.4 km navigational fell race was established in 1985 to commemorate the life of an acclaimed Yorkshire sportsman.

Following a two year absence due to the Covid pandemic, a glorious May evening saw the welcome return of actual head-to-head racing for this 35th annual race.

The big question was whether a challenger could prevent Jack Wood from extending his record run of five consecutive victories? Missing a key but subtle path, Jack Cummings lost his mid-way lead. From the highest point of the race, the trig point atop Rombalds Moor, all was set for a dual between Jack Wood and former men's U23 winner, Joe Woodley. The latter stages of the senior race require speed, sound route choice, agility and a degree of courage for the steep, rocky descent of Ilkley Moor. Running for Dark Peak Fell Runners and with a 23 second margin, Joe Woodley took the men's title in the time of 40:03. Ilkley Harrier Jack Wood was second with Harry Kingston of North Leeds Fell Runners placed third. The Arthur Dolphin Trophy for the first man U23 was awarded to Arran Horne of Leeds University who was 20th overall.

Aged only 17 years, local girl Emily Gibbins of Ilkley Harriers not only took the women's U23 Pat Bloor Trophy but also won the overall senior women's race. In what was her first attempt and in a time of 46:13, this is a most impressive result. Emily's name now joins a host of 'greats' engraved on the iconic trophy featuring the Swastika stone carving. Running for Leeds University, Betty Bergstrand took 2nd place and in 3rd position was Issy Rowe of Harrogate Harriers.

In the veteran men's classes Adam Osborne of Leeds City came 5th overall taking the V40 title whilst Ilkley Harrier Jeff Green won the V50 class. First place in V60 was Steve Webb of Valley Striders and the M70 title went to Ilkley Harrier Malcolm Pickering. As the first ever runner in the M80 class, 82yr old Norman Bush of FRA laid down the gauntlet with an impressive time of 70:12.

Only 10 seconds separated first-placed V40 Claire Cooper of Keighley & Craven from Niamh Jackson running for North Leeds Fell Runners. The women's V50 and V60 classes were won by Ilkley Harriers through Alison Weston and Joyce Marshall.

With three runners to count the team competition saw a record entry of 17 men's and 6 women's teams vying for top spot. Representing Leeds University, Betty Bergstrand, Pippa Carcas and Izzy White took first place in the women's team competition. Roundhay Runners were second, followed by Ilkley Harriers. In the men's category, Jack Wood, Jack Cummings and Michael Odell secured first place for Ilkley Harriers with North Leeds Fell Runners placed second and Leeds City third.

There has always been an association between fell racing and beer, particularly from local brewers. We are extremely grateful to our senior race sponsor, the Flying Duck pub in Ilkley. Occupying one of the oldest buildings in Ilkley, this Church Street hostelry is home to the Wharfedale Brewery. All runners and prize-winners in the senior race were rewarded for their efforts with a much appreciated voucher.

Loyal sponsor and supporter of the Jack Bloor races and the Memorial Fund, Terry Lonergan of Complete Runner kindly provided the race numbers.

Earlier in the evening, the Jack Bloor junior races saw enthusiastic performances by youngsters aged 6 to 18 years. The flagged and marshalled courses present an excellent introduction to the joy of fell racing: the buzz on the start line, the initial stampede, the jostling for position, the terrain, the pain, the doubt, the descent, the cheering, the finish, the elation, the banter. Best of all, every junior received a voucher from junior race sponsor, Outside the Box, Ilkley's famous community café. The top three boys and girls in each category were presented with certificates together with elaborate handcrafted cookie-medals, designed, baked, decorated and presented by the team from Outside The Box Café.

As for so many activities, junior racing risked losing momentum due to two years of restrictions posed by the pandemic. It was heartening to see the enthusiasm of the junior runners. Thanks go to the parents and coaches who encourage and support.

Aston Brogden of Otley AC won the U19 boys' race with Beth Rogers of Ilkley Harriers second overall and first girl. The girls' U15 title went to Amber Stewart with Ned Gallagher-Thompson of Keighley & Craven winning the boy's U15 race with a lead of 21 seconds.

Ilkley Harrier Robert Carter won the boy's U13 class whilst Isabelle Jebb took the girls' U13 top spot for Bingley Harriers. Harriet Carter of Ilkley Harriers impressed to come 2nd overall in the U11s race just 2 seconds behind Keighley & Craven's Charlie Headley who took the boys' U11 title. Aged just 6, 7 or 8 years, 17 children set off on the 0.75 km U9 course. First home was Frankie Allen for Keighley & Craven with Robyn Cooper winning the girls' race.

As ever, thanks go to our sponsors and members of the Gritstone Club, Airienteers, Ilkley Harriers and all our other supporters who make this sporting and community event possible. Members of Jack Bloor's climbing club, the Gritstone Club, have marshalled the checkpoints on the Jack Bloor Senior Race since its inauguration in 1985. Particular thanks go to Malcolm Hopkins who has co-ordinated these 'Grits' since 1995. Thank you!

In addition to his own sporting accomplishments, Jack Bloor was renowned for encouraging young people to engage in outdoor sport. All monies raised from these annual races go to the Jack Bloor Fund that helps support young Yorkshire people to develop physical and technical skills in any recognised outdoor adventure sport.

Applicants must be under-26, either from or based in Yorkshire and be a member of a Yorkshire sports club or a national sport governing body. Applications are welcome at any time. Further details can be found at www.jackbloor.co.uk

Since the last race and despite the pandemic, the Fund awarded 27 grants supporting activities ranging from biathlon to canoe slalom, climbing wall instructor award to a wilderness first aid course for expedition leaders and high altitude training to international competition.

Rob King

Race Organiser & Jack Bloor Fund Trustee