

Dark Peak Fell Runners

Chairman's Report 2011

It is great to report that Dark Peak, now well into its 35th year, continues to grow from strength to strength. We are by far the biggest fell running club in the country by membership and if the number of race reports and results on the website are anything to go by it is very rare for there not to be at least one member of the club competing in most races. Some races are obviously more popular and well supported by our members than others and this is not necessarily restricted to those on our doorstep with races in the Lakes and further afield equally benefiting from our support. Throughout the year our members of all abilities continue to demonstrate the versatility, variety and enthusiasm that characterises the sport of fell running. We continue to achieve at all levels both in races, the various championships and relay's as well as the longer challenges. We even saw a rare completion of a winter BG this year, a fine achievement.

Leading on from the discussions at last year's AGM the issue of safety and personal responsibility were to the fore again this year. As such in the autumn a dozen or so of us attended a weekend wilderness first aid training course in the Hope Valley. Although it is to be hoped that we will never need to put what was learnt into practice this was for me a very worthwhile weekend and it is possible we may well consider running a similar course later this year.

The club also organised a basic navigation training course aimed at some of our new, and not so new members. As a club, contrary to the popular view from a number of quarters, we do have amongst us some fine navigators and it was gratifying to see that many of them were prepared to give up their time on the day to help out and as such deserve our thanks. Feedback from the day from all those attending was extremely positive and another course may well be on the cards.

The club runs on a Wednesday remain popular with the 'warts' runs throughout the winter months again regularly attracted in excess of thirty runners. This is in no small part due to the considerable work put in on getting the calendar sorted. This is not a simple task especially during the summer racing season and my thanks go to all those involved in this not insignificant exercise. There have however been some mutterings during the course of the year relating to an apparent lack of enthusiasm by some members to run from the Sportsman. The Sportsman has provided our club with a hospitable, easy to get to 'hub' and focus for club activities for many years and I personally have no problem running from the Sportsman whether it be on the road or fell. There is always a balance to be achieved here with our away days both in the winter and during the fine summer months and I think we do get that balance right. And let's be honest, the Sportsman is as much a member of the club as we all are.

Issues with access and our uneasy relationship with the game keeping fraternity still present us with a number of challenges. This year has seen several reported instances with snares on access land affecting runners which I expect we will discuss later in the meeting. We have also

had to say goodbye to two old friends following the chopping down of the two windswept trees you passed as you ran up towards the shooting butts on the way to High Neb. This act which can only be described as wanton vandalism has generated some understandable criticism from many club members as well as other quarters and a good deal resulting communication between various parties. Unfortunately none of which will bring back what have poetically been called 'nature's bonsai's'.

I have now served Dark Peak as Chairman for three years and whilst I am happy and indeed honoured to stand for another year I have no intention of seeking re election at next year's AGM. Equally I am also aware that Lynn Bland intends standing down as Treasurer after next year. As a club we thrive on minimal organisation but in order to do so a few of us need to do the occasional job. It would be good to get some new blood involved at the bureaucratic sharp end so please feel free to step forward.

On this note there is one job that needs some urgent attention and that is organisation of this year's club dinner. It is something I would like to discuss later but so far we have no organiser for this year's event and no venue either. The survey conducted on the website only contributed a very minimal response as to what you the membership want from the dinner. We are conscious that the cost has to be affordable but it is becoming increasingly difficult to find a venue along with suitable entertainment that allows us to keep costs down. Time is obviously pressing here so it would be good if something could be sorted sooner rather than later. After all the club championships make their welcome return to the Triple Crossing this coming year and it would be great to follow what will no doubt be some fine racing with an evening to match.

Paul Sanderson
May 2011