

## Happy 10th Birthday Durham Fell Runners!

2014 sees DFR reach it's 10th Year. That we have such a vibrant club is testimony to the vision and enthusiasm of those who saw the need for a dedicated off-road running club in Co. Durham and then put the effort in to realise that vision.

Here are some reflections on the past 10 years from one of the Club's founder members - Stu Ferguson.

It may surprise many that DFR has reached the major milestone of being established for 10 years this year. As they say does not seem like five minutes ago and the magnificent seven were sitting in the Strathmore Arms at Holwick in the Northern Pennines dishing out the positions / responsibilities as DFR was born. So why DFR?well many of the early members were already with other road centric clubs in Durham such as Crook, Darlington's Quakers, Sunderland Strollers and the odd fell runner in these clubs would meet up at races. So a sense of 'coming together' came about, as many wanted to enter events such as FRA Relays, seek partners for the KIMM or team events such as Old County Tops.

The inaugural Chairman was the Prof, Rob McSherry, this was an easy decision as he had just taken up chair of SouthTeesHospital something or other, so he had the right skills. Kev Shevels was tasked with writing the clubs constitution [he had written the constitution for the Quakers ] focusing on 4 key area's

- Showcase The Durham Dales by holding a race series .
- Promote the sport of Fell Running by regular Training Session.
- Have fun.
- Be non bureaucratic.

Stu set up the first website, initially the Angel Fire site, it was hot... Scott Watson took over all matters web and now John Nightingale has the pleasure and what you see today is John's good work. Gerry Hehir was the secretary and Ray Maynard membership guru, so there you had it. The core of a club had taken shape. Gerry and Stu started the training sessions.

Within the space of about two weeks the club was 20 strong.

The distinctive club vests were manufactured in Shildon, County Durham and were unveiled at the Killhope Wild Race.

Some memorable moments over the years....

- First entry for the FRA relays , we did not have enough vests for everyone, so we had to 'un-noticed' recycle the vests at the changeover point.
- Alex Menarry [then Chairman] winning at the worlds vets championships at Keswick.
- Life member Miss V Sponge's ongoing interest in fondant fancies and all things related leading to the seminal critique of après race cakes published in the Fell Runner Magazine.

- DFR has always had a large Mountain Marathon group of fanatics: many, many category winners – too many to remember. Top of the Class should go to Jim Mann and Duncan Archer's 3 in a row LAMM Elite titles 2012 to 2014. The most photogenic is most definitely team, Alan Hunt and Patrick Bonnett.
- Bob Graham Rounds – all of them but special mention Jim Mann's Winter current record.
- It is not just about Elite athletes but the likes of Denise Tunstall and Paul Kelly whom just seem to be at every race each weekend during the year.

There have been many Long Distance events that have attracted the attentions of members of DFR such as the Lakeland 100, UTMB, TDS & the Dragon's Back. Some members have also taken advantage of completing in far away events such as the MDS and the Everest Marathon.

The club is generally a very social group and regular events are planned as well as attending races, the Club Championship goes from strength to strength.

The Genesis of DFROT has been an enjoyable ride. The 'on tour' sessions takes us to all corners of County Durham and further afield. Over past few years these have grown successfully into weekends away rather than just days out.

The Thursday training sessions are the cornerstone of the club. Initial years were from Hamsterley Forest, County Durham's Grove car park but after discussion with Forestry Commission we moved to the Visitor Centre where there was better light for those winter nights and they opened the toilets for use. A place for hard training [ if you want ] but also for runs , navigation training, gossip, astronomy, bird watching , bat watching, advice on all aspects of fell running and generally just have a good old night out on the fells. What is particularly pleasing for coaches Alan Hunt and Stu is the mix around on these sessions, male and female, mixed abilities rub shoulders with Elite athletes.

Recently the Training sessions have had the addition of a handicap series, better known as Andy Cap, not just because it is organised by Andy Blackett our current Men's Team Captain. During August and September special OMM sessions are also planned for budding competitors.

Behind the scenes, a lot goes on which often isn't that visible to those who pull on a DFR Vest or spend their winter Thursday nights lighting up the skies of Hamsterley. The current Committee is made up of Andrew Charles (Club Secretary), Dan Rhodes (Membership Secretary), Jon West (Treasurer) and Patrick Bonnett (Chairman), some of whom have been in these roles for the past five years - a very long time to have been eating all the biscuits provided by Karen Partridge & Mike Mallen at Committee meetings.

The Club also tries to put something back into the fell running scene through the annual Cronkley Fell Race (this year on 29th June) which regularly attracts race reviews from those taking part and over the years has enabled us to donate over £500 to local charities. It owes its success in no small part to the willing help provided by members of the Club who volunteer to marshal and help behind the scenes and without whom the race couldn't take place. This year all runners received a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary bottle of beer. [ See Race Report section ].

We have had 10 [ or is it 9 ? ] annual Christmas dinners , all organised by Karen. The attendances have grown over the years so venues have to be changed every few years. Over past three years this has developed into the annual trophy giving ceremony.

So ten years on , we are a healthy size of around 70 very active fell runners with the constitution still holding strong. Long may it continue .

*Stuart Ferguson –Level 3 Fell and Hill Coach and Founder Member.*