

The Dark Side Jan to Apr 2011.

With four months of the year already having passed us by it seemed a good time to summarise what our “Dark Side” athletes have been up to for the last four months.

The year kicked off on New Year’s Day with Steve Wathall completing the Hardmoors 30 mile race from Ravenscar in North Yorkshire with a view to entering the 110 mile race in the same series later on in the year. On the same day Max and Lynda Howard (our 2010 Dark Side champions) travelled up to Kirkby Stephen for the 8 mile Nine Standards race. Eight days later they were again flying the flag for Retford at the 15 mile Trig Point race in Stafford whilst sister in law Helen was competing with Charmian in the first mini mountain marathon of the year at Hayfield. On the 16th January Steve Wathall and Dave Pickering ran the 12 mile White Holme Circular near Littleborough where they were joined by Ross Howard on his way back to Retford from his new base near Ulverston in Cumbria. January was completed at the navigation event of the Kinder Trial again from Hayfield where Steve Wathall and Dave Pickering ran as a pair and Charmian tested her navigation as a solo.

February was inter-club cross country season and only Max chose to venture out to the Mickledon Straddle. Charmian and Steve competed in the D&W mini mountain marathon from Chesterfield where Charmian managed to finish just five points behind Steve at the end of the three hour navigation event.

March saw the first of the club All Rounder races being the Retford Half Marathon on 13th March but the day before Charmian chose to join John Sinclair and his son in law Steve Firman for their inaugural fell race at the 7 mile Windmills Whizz in Yorkshire. Then both Charmian and Lynda Howard ran the Retford Half in good style with Lynda improving her personal best and Charmian achieving the bronze standard. On 20th March Lynda was the only Retford athlete to run in the new Notts. County Championship fell race at Wolfs Pit while Charmian opted for another D&W mini mountain marathon from Chapel en le Frith. One week later five members travelled up to Cumbria for the inaugural 27 mile Tour de Kentmere where Steve Wathall finished in pole position which earned him the magic 1000 points towards the 2011 fell running all rounder competition. Dave Pickering was second man home followed by Helen Howard, Steve Woodward and Charmian. Meanwhile Max and Lynda ran in the Edale Skyline, the tough 21 mile circuit of this Peak District village.

Max and Lynda were back in the Peak District on 10th April for the 10 mile Kinder Downfall race. Then Charmian and Steve Wathall travelled up to the north west highlands of Scotland for the Highlander two day mountain marathon in Ullapool. This is a tough event but there is a bar and a ceilidh at mid camp and the weather was superb. April was concluded with the Easter club trip to the Isle of Man for the 31.5 mile Manx Mountain Marathon where Steve Wathall opted for the later mass start with Charmian, Steve Woodward and Dave Pickering starting 1:45 earlier in very poor visibility with driving rain. The sun came out in the afternoon and it was a great feeling to run down from the summit of Bradda Hill, past the Tower and down into the town of Port Erin where the finish was on the beach. This is a superb race which climbs 8000 feet and visits 11 of the island’s summits running down the spine of the island from Ramsey to Port Erin. On the same day Helen Howard travelled to Cumbria for the tough 15.4 mile Teenager with Altitude race which she completed with brother in law Ross. The final race of the quarter was Coniston where Steve Wathall managed to take a fall and tried to head butt a rock. The blood looked impressive but no lasting damage apart from scabby knees!!

So hears to a summer of great racing in good company – give it a try – you might just like it.