

Bradda Niarbyl – 11th July 2015

- Distance: 25km / 15.5m
- Climb: 1,789m / 5,869ft

Manx Fell Runners organised round four of the English Fell Running Championship, the first race counter for the championship to be held on the Isle of Man. The race, part of the Port Erin Beach festival which included beach games, an open water swim and a cycle sportive on the Sunday, attracted more than 200 competitors, mostly from off-island. The gruelling course, devised by Lloyd Taggart and Tom Cringle, started with a scramble up a grass bank in Port Erin watched by spectators from the promenade; from there it was over to Milners Tower and north along the west coast to a loop around Niarbyl Bay and back, taking in some stunning scenery along the coastal path.

Simon Bailey (Mercia) and Morgan Donnelly (Borrowdale) made light of the tough course and hot conditions finishing just 31 seconds apart; Simon, looking for his seventh English title took the victory in 2:09:54 and with it the leadership of the championship, whilst Morgan was leading v40 and was reported to have joined the beach mascots obstacle race in a large bumble bee costume, later in the afternoon. Matthew Roberts (Calder Valley) took 3rd place in 2:13:23 by only 13 seconds from his club mate, Karl Gray who in turn pipped Kim Collison (Borrowdale) by one second; as well as leading the v45 championship, Karl now holds 2nd place in the open championship, and shares 1st place in the v40s with Gavin Mulholland (also Calder Valley) whose 6th place finish also elevated him to 3rd place in the open championship. First local runner in 7th place, Lloyd Taggart (Manx Fell Runners) moved up to 3rd place in the v40 championship and consolidated his 2nd place in the v45 championship and with victories in the last two races the opportunity of sharing the title with Karl.

Reigning champion, Victoria Wilkinson (Bingley) missed Duddon with a foot injury but after her 6th place at the recent European Mountain Running Championships, Victoria dominated the race, finishing in 28th place overall in 2:29:59, 7 minutes ahead of Sophie Horrocks (Rossendale) with Helen Berry (Holmfirth), heading the v40s 3 minutes further back in 3rd. Caitlin Rice (Glossopdale) edged out v40 Mel Price (Mercia) by 23 seconds for 4th place taking over the leadership of the championship ahead of Mel and v45 Judith Jepson (Dark Park), who was a further 3 minutes back in 6th place. 8th placed (4th v40) Hazel Robinson moved up to 3rd in the v40 championship behind Mel and Judith. Judith Jepson confirmed her 5th consecutive English title by remaining unbeaten in the v45s. As well as taking over the lead in the v50s ahead of Julie Carter (Keswick) and Rowena Browne (Bowland) who did not run at Bradda, Sally Newman (Calder Valley) moved up to share 2nd place in the v45 championship with Nicky Spink (Dark Park) who also missed Bradda. Pat Goodall (Totley) was 2nd v50 and leading v55, moving her up to 3rd in the v55 championship behind joint leaders Becky Weight (Bingley), 2nd v55 at Bradda and Wendy Dodds (Clayton Le Moors), 4th v55 at Bradda.

Less than 5 seconds separated the first three v50s, David Taylor (Dark Peak), Stephen Pyke (Dark Peak) and Richard Houghton (Pennine). 4th v50 just over a minute further back, reigning champion Mark Roberts (Borrowdale), retained his leadership of the v50s and 3rd place in the v45s whilst Richard Houghton retained his 2nd place overall in the v50s. Mike Johnson (Bowland) held on to 3rd place in the v50s and still has a clear lead in the v55 championship despite finishing over four minutes behind v65 Ben Grant (Harrogate); Andy Hauser was 3rd v55 ahead of v60s Tom McGaff

(Cheshire Hill Racers) and Chris Davies (Saddleworth) who as well as holding 2nd and 3rd positions in the v55s, retain their lead in the v60 championship ahead of Ben Grant. Ben Grant is now certain to retain his v65 crown but despite only finishing 6th v65 at Bradda, Robert Taylor (Pennine) can still share the title with victories in the last two races. Andy Watts (Cheshire Hill Racers) and Peter Ellerton (Bingley) were 2nd and 3rd v65s with Peter moving into 3rd overall behind Robert.

With 5 runners in the top 17, Calder Valley easily won the men's open teams ahead of Dark Peak with host club, Manx Fell Runners in 3rd; Calder Valley thus extended their overall lead over Dark Peak with Helm Hill falling further back in 3rd as they didn't field a team at Bradda. Calder Valley headed Dark Peak in the v40s with Borrowdale in 3rd place and these places are also reflected in the overall positions. A victory for Dark Peak in the v50s moved them one point ahead of Bowland who could only manage 3rd. 2nd place for Pennine consolidated their 3rd place in the overall standings

In the women's open teams, 2013 and 2014 champions Ambleside retained their title with their fourth straight victory but there is fierce competition for the other medal positions; Calder Valley who could only manage 4th stay in 2nd place overall but Dark Peak are only one point behind them after their 2nd place at Bradda. Mercia took 3rd and are still in contention for the minor medals. In the absence of Dark Peak, Ambleside moved within 2 points of their close rivals in the v40s with Helm Hill one point further back following their 2nd place at Bradda. North Leeds Fell Runners took a surprise 3rd and their first ever team championship points.