

## **Darren Jones Clougha Pike Fell race (24 June 2023) – race report**

After a three-year hiatus Bowland Fell Runners finally managed to hold the Darren Jones Clougha Pike Fell race. Traditionally the race piggy-backs off Quernmore Sports: the village fete that serves as a useful logistical hub and brings a buzz to the whole village. Unfortunately, QSports has not been resurrected and hence we decided to go it alone which meant a significant logistical uptick and only a short time (several weeks) to get the race advertised and 'out there'.

For those who know the race, the route crosses private farmland before joining the rocky path of Clougha Scar, over the summit of Clougha before following a loose trod back across open fellside. A steep descent then follows which takes runners back to the pasture and onto the finish field near Quernmore crossroads. Given the length of the route (4.9 miles), the race is somewhat 'marshal heavy', notably on the lower fields where livestock gates are found aplenty. Each gate requiring a separate marshal as wandering livestock would quickly bring the demise of the Clougha race!

### **Runners and the day:**

Despite the short lead in period, we managed to attract 48 runners with the race also selected as one of BFR's club champs events. There was little surprise then that the start line up was a sea of 'pea & carrot' vests. Although there were plenty of helpers for pre- and post-race tasks, securing sufficient marshals for the whole route was difficult as most people wanted to race (a good problem!). Fortunately a few 'volunteers' came forward at the last minute (erm..thanks, Sonia) and the route was covered! However, there were only 2 marshals present at the higher fell sites. In hindsight perhaps a few more could be recruited for next year.

The weather was good/warm and dry, although the day started with low cloud/drizzle on the Bowland tops. A decision for a kit-less race was only made later in the morning once the tops had cleared and the forecast remained good (helpful for those new to fellracing who might not be aware of kit requirements). As is traditional, the whole route was flagged to reduce navigation issues for new runners (and..ahem...some experienced folk too!). Bowland & Pennine MRT were invited and were present both in the registration field and on Clougha Pike, which was reassuring. Carparking proceeds (£100) have been donated to them.

### **The race:**

48 runners ran out and 48 ran back in! Sub-40 minute times were not recorded this year, but nonetheless fantastic runs from two Helm Hill vet seniors – Keiran Hodgson and Kenny Lee, who clinched first and second place respectively. Also, an excellent run from Jenny Roberts, North Leeds FRs as first woman. Nice to see a Yorkshire lass this side of the Pennines (red roses for next year's prize though). Rowena Browne (BFR, FV60) was second female.

### **Useful comms:**

As the mobile signal was really good across the whole race area a WhatsApp group of all the marshals/helpers was created. This proved very useful as everyone was alerted to the race start and commentary flowed as the race commenced. The MRT liked this and wanted to join the group! Of course there are limitations in the Lakes, Scotland and elsewhere where the mobile signal is patchy. Furthermore, in bright sunlight (and obviously wind and rain) mobile phones are poor.

### **Cutoff:**

Since the race was last run back in 2019, a cut off time at the 'fell gate' was introduced (this is a marshalled gate where the route transitions from rough pasture to open fell). Given the lack of marshals in the period leading up to the race, a decision was made to set this cut-off as 30mins after the race start. This was highlighted on the race maps in the Registration hall. Three runners

did not make the cut off and were turned back. After the race two of the runners politely expressed their disappointment with this cut-off; principally because it wasn't advertised prior to the race and also that it was going to be tough to meet this time anyway. In response, the cut-off will certainly be added to the race details ready for next year's event (apologies for the lack of notification for this year's race). The cut off time will also be reviewed ready for next year's race, with a short time if the weather is poor and a longer time if the conditions are good.

### **A big thanks...**

Lots of people to thank here. The landowners for granting us permission which includes the Grosvenor Estate (..think Duke of Westminster) and Natural England (as much of the fellside is SSSI). Quernmore WI for providing lots of cake and endless teas and coffees. They provided a real buzz to the hall. Bowland & Pennine mountain rescue who undoubtedly would undertake the heavy lifting in the case of an incident. James Gray of OMM who donated a whole stack of OMM gift vouchers for BFR, as well as fluttery banners for the finish line and who also ran the race. Finally all the BFR club, particularly Chris Reade and Pam Farmer who provided lots of support as well as a pair of wise heads.

Cris Halsall – RO