

You can read elsewhere in the magazine Allan Greenwood's account of his solo run round the Calderdale Relay course and no doubt many of you have enjoyed the scenery, the competition and the convoluted logistics of this excellent day out BUT, be warned, the future of the Relay, like many other events, lies very much with you. Linda, like several previously dedicated organisers, is getting a bit fed up with some of the things that go on, so it might be salutary to have a careful read of her comments and see if you can do your bit, by example, intervention or whatever, to help ensure that Linda and other organisers don't feel that their events are becoming more of a chore than a pleasure.

The Calderdale Way Relay

Its future - in your hands from Linda Crabtree

One of the most popular events, if not the most popular event, on the fell running calendar is the annual Calderdale Way Relay. Held in December, the relay was inaugurated in 1981 by a team of ten intrepid Halifax Harriers members who ran in pairs over the 50 miles circuit in five stages from Clay House West Vale, the official CW starting point, to celebrate the opening of the first Long Distance Path in England. Back then, it was a simple Halifax club social run. It wasn't until three years later that it was opened up to other teams, the first event being won in 5hrs, 50min and 21sec by Rosendale Harriers and AC.

However, the relay - now split over six stages and run in pairs - is so popular today that the police have asked the organisers, Halifax Harriers to impose an entry limit of 100 teams. This is for safety and to ease traffic congestion at leg changeover points.

With 1200 runners to monitor, the Calderdale Way Relay is the biggest single-day off-road race in Britain. Organisation of the event begins almost as soon as the dust from the previous one has settled, by way of consultations with land owners and farmers. We have over eighty marshals and officials in position on the day, those of us who run in the Halifax Harriers teams must do our own marshalling stint before or after running our legs. Most, but not all our officials and helpers are runners. Some are friends who like to get involved. Others are

former club runners who have retired or have gone into coaching etc. Whoever they are, they still they brave the day, whatever the weather throws up, to help us out.

The relay these days seems to be becoming more of a headache to organise. Some might say that the event has become a victim of its own success. In recent years the organising committee have heard tales about officials receiving all kinds of totally unnecessary hassle from competitors before and during the event and here lies the reason behind the penning of this article for the wider fell running public. Here are a few recent examples.

If this trend continues, we will hang up our clipboards.

Firstly, as mentioned previously, West Yorkshire Police have asked us to impose a limit on entries. 100 teams is the maximum we can safely handle. Entry forms are sent out by our entries secretary to club captains or named officials from our mailing list in early September and are processed on a "first come, first served" basis. When that limit is reached, entries received thereafter are placed on a reserve list, and a standard rejection letter is mailed out to them. We seldom have teams who contact us to register their withdrawal. Prior to the 2004 relay, an irate runner rang our entries secretary objecting about his team having been issued with a standard rejection notice. It was explained that they were on the reserve list at team number

112. He proceeded to argue that his club had an elite team with several international runners in the side! It was again explained that unfortunately, his club had sent their entry form back too late. At this point, after asking why we couldn't "renow a slower team" he became abusive. This was deemed to be most upsetting to our secretary, a volunteer club member who gives her limited time willingly, not to mention struggling to bring up her autistic son alone.

Further to this, the runner then proceeded to slag off Halifax Harriers, the event, and in particular our secretary and her family publicly on the FRA website Forum. This is

entirely unacceptable. We still have not had an apology from either the runner or his club.

On the first stage, at last year's event, some impatient runners, who couldn't be bothered to queue at the small field gate just before the road bridge onto Norland Moor, took on themselves to leave open the large farm gate alongside. What happened next? Well, luckily one of our friends from a neighbouring running club was able to round up the cows from the road before a serious traffic accident occurred, not to mention what the farmer might have done.

On the same day, last year, our club President was officiating



Harngate 'A' team demonstrate fine step-descending style on the Relay
Photo - Allan Greenwood

at the beginning of stage three, (Centre Vale Park, Todmorden) when he noticed a runner getting ready to start his leg without wearing his club vest. He politely and correctly pointed out that he was in breach of the rules whereupon the runner told our official to "eff off".

Later, the same day, our relay entries Secretary saw some runners - just a few hundred yards in front of her while she herself competed on leg five - who hopped over a farm gate and blatantly took a short cut across the fields. Despite being called back they carried on over another gate and even tried to deny their actions when challenged at the end of the leg!

On the lane at the leg 4 - 5 changeover at Wainstalls, two of our non running club members were trying to keep the hand-over point clear so that they could check numbers. They kept repeatedly asking runners not to go wandering into the lane, so

obscuring their view. At one point they were subjected to verbal abuse. If I knew their names or clubs I would print them here. How on Earth are we supposed to coax these volunteers back to perform these thankless tasks at another event? There must be little hope, especially if the forecast is for poor weather.

Our entries secretary received a 'phone call from a runner, at 9-45 p.m. on Sunday evening, a few hours after the relay had finished. The caller said that he wished to "defend himself" after being accused by another team of an alleged short cutting incident.

Remember, if you will, that our secretary was relaxing at home after having been on the go all day since 5-30 a.m. including taking charge of registration and running a leg herself and helping with the results and prizegiving. Sometimes, enough really is enough!

Finally, and a most upsetting episode for the organisers was

the incident first seen in 2004 and repeated at last year's event. We have prided ourselves on the superb organisation we provide at this event, with free showers and food for those that come back to the headquarters at Copley. We also pride ourselves in the high quality prizes we offer, totalling £1,400. As well as the perpetual trophies, we buy WH Smith Gift Tokens and have some excellent quality long sleeve t-shirts made with the event logo and the date printed on the front.

Imagine our dismay when a member of one of the prize-winning teams was again seen to parade around the rugby club after the prize presentation shouting, "T shirt for sale, five pounds".

So what is the upshot of all this? Well, we love the Calderdale relay as much as the hundreds of competitors who turn out each year to take part in it. However the organisers are becoming increasingly frustrated at the

minority who are making an enjoyable event more of a chore.

The 2006 Calderdale Way relay will go ahead as planned. However it will see some changes.

Firstly, the abuse to our officials. This will NOT be tolerated and any offending club will be immediately disqualified, that is **THE WHOLE TEAM**. Secondly, we must ask all runners again, to stop cheating by short cutting. We cannot marshal or monitor the whole 50 mile route. We rely on your honesty to receive your sections and on the day, stick to the Calderdale Way as set down in the route guide book.

The message is clear. Do not take the event, our officials, the organisers or the prizes for granted.

Stop cheating / shortcutting and carry or wear the required kit. Finally, stick to the route - or run in your last Calderdale Way relay.



**GASP!
PANT!**

"Fellrunners!! Nasty, sweaty, dirty, hairy little men in baggy shorts and ripped vests gasping and panting their way uphill" just like Emma Cox of Macclesfield at the Bunny Run.

Photo - Allan Greenwood