

2017 Jura Fell Race

Only one record this year. Hector Haines, who took Mark Rigby's 20-year record in 2014 was head to head with Finlay Wild – in record-breaking form. Finlay took another 1m16s off to set a new benchmark. These have been good years to be at the finish line. Only Billy Bland's insuperable (?) 1988 M40 3h9m36s record looks safe, and only Hector, Finlay, Mark, Colin Donnelly and Rob Jebb have ever run faster. Ian Holmes' best time was 3h10m10s. Kieran Carr's M60 record of 4h12m57s will be ten years old next year.

This was Ian's 21st completion, every single one under 3h50m. George Scott and Mark Shaw also completed their 21st race.

There was an interesting weather/route conundrum this year. The week had been dry and fairly sunny, but all the forecasts were for a band of electric storms to move up the west coast and isles during the middle of the race. We had 14 MRT personnel deploying, and all hill marshals with their Raynet radio team were about to leave when we hatched and agreed a cunning plan. At the first sign of lightning or thunder, all marshals on the hilltop controls 4 to 7 would immediately be called down to their corresponding "bad weather" alternative controls, and this entailed inventing a new CP6a to replace Corra Bheinn. The grid reference was supplied and all competitors informed at 9:45 that they might have to change course mid race, so to be prepared. MRT split up and deployed at strategic points just in case. Visibility was excellent, which helped with the decision. We were lucky, and everyone was very pleased to run the full normal course – especially Finlay.

There was huge pressure on entries, and many were disappointed in the ballot. The event really cannot take more than 250 starters, but in a calculated gamble about 360 were accepted on to the list. About 75 withdrew before race week, and with no-shows, there were 256 starters on the day.

Jasmin Paris decided not to compete about an hour before the start leaving the spoils to "normal" very good athletes. Jill Stephen achieved an excellent win, with newcomer Diana Macdonald not far behind, followed in turn by evergreen Nicky Spinks. Together with Jenny Caddick, four women achieved a whisky tumbler. Nicky's time was almost exactly the same as last year, which had been only a few days after her double Bob Graham record.

22 men achieved a tumbler, with Huw Davies (6 completions) getting his first one – with 53 seconds to spare. His dad was second M60 – they used to finish together, but no longer. The only W60 was the unstoppable Wendy Dodds in an excellent time. Despite valiant efforts, both M70 runners were defeated by the cut-off times.

Pete and Sarah Haines' whole family of six completed the race. Their youngest, Lucy, having just reached the age of 18 was fifth woman, just missing out on a tumbler, and Hector, the previous record holder was second overall.

It was gratifying to see the John Dare Shield for an outstanding performance in the Scottish Islands Peaks Race the weekend before Jura, plus Jura, as judged by their peers, go to a partnership of two runners for the first time: Outi Kamarainen and Leyre Flores.

The success of this event on the day depended on the combined efforts and help of many brilliant and excellent people all pulling together. Huge thanks to all. There is so much goodwill behind this race that it has been a privilege to be part of it for the last seven years.

Graham Arthur