

Cross Country Running by Ron Hastings



The Borders Cross Country Running Series came to Minto hosted by

the Golf Club and with a course that thrilled all who took part. The event has been around for about 30 years, and is staged throughout The Borders over the winter months allowing runners to experience the excitement of running cross-country whilst enjoying the magnificent scenery here not least in our own back yard at Minto. This season saw Teviotdale Harriers bringing the series to the Hawick area for the first time staging their first ever Border Cross Country Race. This season started in the back end of the year with the first in the series staged at Lauder in November and Visiting various locations from Peebles to Paxton and along the beach at Spittal it truly is a pan Borders event.

As fate would have it The event at Minto coincided with one of the few days of wintry weather with a cold start and snow flurries greeting the competitors on a wintry Sunday in February. Running is a sport for all ages from the young to the young at heart and first off at the start line near the Club House were 98 youngster aged from 8 years and up who bravely took on the wintry weather and icy hard underfoot conditions to complete a tough course through woodland at Minto Glen with the winner and first home Cameron Fordyce in an impressive 15 mins 38 seconds. Eight junior Teviotdale Harriers took part and young Irvine Welsh was first Teviotdale Harrier home in 18m 23ss placing him 2nd in his 10-11 yrs age category.



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Jamieson was the fastest Teviotdale girl across the finish, and second in her 12-13 age group in a fantastic time of 19m38s and all deserved a medal for taking part and having a go.

Shortly after noon the adult race got underway heading down the track alongside the clubhouse through Minto Glen woods and the Estate around a 6.6 km course, including a challenging long climb to loop around Fatlips Castle. 165 runners finished with Mark Shankey of Hunters Bog Trotters first back in a blistering 25m 35s. First home of the seven Teviotdale Harriers was Iain Williams in 29m41s and first lady runner Caroline Jack in 39m47s

Post race rest and recuperation was on hand within of the club house where the Steward and club members were on hand to provide revitalising warm drinks, soup and bacon rolls for the runners and the many family and friends that had come along to lend their support.

Club President Dr Paul Lockie commented "The event was a huge success and the Harriers are most grateful to Minto Golf Club, Lord Minto, Mr and Mrs Benson and Mr and Mrs Dickson, James Manners, and all the helpers and Marshalls who all gave their support at Minto and while this may be the first time we have raced at Minto we hope that we will be back next year".

National Park Update by Malcolm R Dickson

Scottish Borders Council has just finished consulting stakeholders, including individual members of the public, on its ideas for the next version of its Local Development Plan. The consultation document included a question on the National Park proposal. This will be the first formal test of public opinion on the issue, but hopefully not the last since Campaign members believe that this is more of an economic development proposal than a planning matter. We truly believe that, because of the flexibility of the Scottish legislation on this, a Borders National Park need not have any greater restrictions on planning than there are at present.

Meanwhile, we have continued our own discussions with communities, business people and with land-owners and farmers. Most Borders companies we've spoken to, and not just tourism-related businesses, seem to appreciate the significant and sustained economic boost which National Park designation would bring. Even some understandably cautious landowners and farmers are beginning to see the positives for them and the Borders communities in general.

Whatever happens after Brexit, no-one is predicting that farmers will get more subsidies than before. What informed opinion is saying is that whatever subsidies are forthcoming for farmers will be even more strongly linked to environmental stewardship than ever before. It follows that farmers in a National Park area will be better placed than most to gain from the new regime, whether by getting expert advice from a National Park Authority, or by receiving favourable consideration because of the status which Park designation carries. And if anyone tries to tell me that we don't have the scenery of a National Park, I simply show them some of the hundreds of photos we've received, free, from amateur and professional Borders' photographers who want to see our beautiful Borderlands recognised across the world. This one of Denholm from Denholm Hill is not as technically or artistically good as the others (because I took it). However, it shows that a landscape like this is only maintained thanks to the fact that most of it is worked and looked after by those who farm it. A Scottish Borders National Park will not set out to restrict farming and land management, it will celebrate it.

