

Tollymore Monument Race

Morgan shows them the way!

The course had been decided and a few changes made much to the annoyance of Hen Kelly who had put in months of preparation to run last years course. After a phone call to Seamie at 6.50am it was decided a final run was needed. Seamie and Hen met up on Tuesday night and gave the course the thumbs up. I am not sure what they expected from the race director but they should have known he is fond of his traditional route.

What a great night to be alive, Tollymore was at it's glorious best in this beautiful spring evening. 332 runners took to the line in what was a new Hill and Dale record entry.

Sign on was slick with Debbie, Rita and Mary organising the willing helpers. New technology was being lauded as runners details appeared on the laptop screen with every zap of the scanner.

The runners took to the line ready to go at 7.30pm. The aptly named race started parallel to the finish and headed for the Monument.

This granite obelisk is 25 feet high,

It was built by the 2nd Earl of Roden, in memory of his second son who died of an asthma attack while serving in the Royal Navy on 10th July 1812, aged 23.

The route takes in Foley's bridge and follows the river before a sharp climb up to Curraghyard on bike tracks. The runners then cross the wall onto the open mountain round the Marshall on the summit before the long run for home and the final daunting slog up the green rig.

The field was led up Curraghyard climb by Seamie Lynch followed by Willie McKee. This continued to be the format for the night until the final 50m when McKee pulled out of Seamie's slip stream and made the final dash for the line.

Newcastle's high performance coach Oggie Mawhirt was far from impressed with the goings on in the final few metres but he was even more concerned with the performance after the finish! He took to his heels and into the van muttering " it wouldn't of happened in my day" Podge nodded.

In the ladies race Esther Dickson took the win from Karen Wilton. Karen in her own admission does not like any technical descending. Maybe she needs a lesson from McCann who in Race1 was giving out advice on how to go down!

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Frank Morgan has been taking times for Hill and Dale with his trusty pen, clipboard and stopwatch since the 1980s. Without fail he has delivered.

However in the last few years scanners have come to the fore. This season even more improvements, a super duper scanner was purchased and a results system developed .Pre race the Newcastle AC committee were brimming with confidence. Alas they put young Frank to the bench. The race organisers went with the flo!

As the last runners finished the results team headed to the Clanbrassil barn. Shortly later it became obvious there was an issue. No results and no Frank as backup.

As the formalities began Morgan was last heard shouting "Mug "in the pub afterwards. Not sure who it was aimed at but by the end of the night it could have applied to a number of folk.

The Hill and Dale has always been about the races within the race and the achievements of many to complete their first taste of off road running. It is the main reason how many people got into Mountain running. It is great to see clubs and individuals from all areas of the province making the Thursday night trip.

A runner that needs special mention is Stevie Rice he tells me he had the run of his life and without results how can we tell but I knew one day he would break into the top 100.

All in all it was a great night in Tollymore, blue skies, a dry course, nobody got lost and plenty of craic!

Apologies to all for a lack of results on this record breaking night!

Evergreen