

Dickson and Crudgington Rock in the Castle Bog at Leitrim Lodge

from Leitrim Lodge by Boris from Drumee

“Many’s a man got sunburnt red, dig’n turf of a summers day, in the Castle Bog at Leitrim Lodge”.

These were some of the wise words of wisdom which race directors the McVeigh brothers (young McVeigh and the younger McVeigh) received from a well versed local birthday boy in advance of race number five of the 2022 Hill and Dale series. This race is formally known as Rocky but also takes in parts of the former Leitrim Lodge estate. When Narcissus Batt, a wealthy Belfast banker and landowner, bought the Leitrim estate in 1834 little did he think that his legend would be remembered 188 years later in 2022 by the one and only Boris from Drumee.

After some protracted negotiations and the establishment of a Task and Finish Group involving Bogboy, The Prophet and Drumee Boris a decision was actually made that, in reverse to the 2019 race, this years Rocky course would be anti-clockwise taking in the four summits of Altataggart, Pierces Castle, Tornamrock and Rocky respectively.

Altataggart, which translates in Gaelic as *‘the Hill of the Priest’* reflecting its significance historically as a site of clandestine religious worship and Tornamrock also known locally as *‘the Badgers Tower’* given its historical significance a site of special environmental interest for badger nesting were just two of the many interesting Leitrim Lodge facts, which pre-race left The Prophet scratching his head as he supped 4 star hotel sponsored tea and tucked into copious amounts of chocolate digestive biscuits in the back of his red Ford Transit van in the Batts Wood car park.

Registration opens, birth certificates at the ready!

By 6pm the Clonduff/Cabra townland of Leitrim, also known locally as the grey ridge, started to become inundated by an eclectic mix of runners and interested onlookers from all parts of Northern Ireland. Prior to registration opening concerns were raised by the officers in charge, namely Debbie Kendal, Kerry O’Flaherty and Darragh Mc Crickard, regarding Marathon Mans proposals following Race 4 to check everyones birth certificates in order to fully satisfy all of the competition’s legal requirements. Marthon Mans allegations following Race 4 of the young McVeigh being “consistently inconsistent” have not gone unnoticed and when Boris asked the young McVeigh to comment on the matter he approached it with extreme caution and simply put stated “a Judicial Review hearing may be needed to address Marathon Mans defamation of character”.

Fresh from his recent local retreat Bogboy was utterly astounded as race registration opened sharp at 6.30pm and Connell Nugent (Newcastle and District AC) miraculously arrived at 6.32pm. Bogboy first thought that British Summer Time had come to an end and the clocks had changed but actually Nugent was concerned that additional registration checks were going to be carried out and ensured to get to the front of the line.

Blow Your Whistle Frank!

With registration complete at 7.20pm a total of 205 keen runners were ready to toe the line and tackle the extremely undulating course from the Shankey’s River start point. To throw another interesting local fact into the mix and to confuse The Prophet even more the Shankey’s River is one of the headwaters of Northern Ireland’s longest river the River Bann and feeds into the Atlantic about 80miles to the north. With the course management team director Bryansford man Hen Kelly confirming that all the course management team, which included the infamous Rory McMullan who forgot his running]gear, were in position it was over to the illustrious Frank Morgan to get proceedings

under way. Race director the young McVeigh give his pre-race instructions, which also included him rambling on about apples falling from trees, and then confusing to many he handed over to his son Connaire Og to blow his start whistle at 7.28pm rather than the tried and trusted whistle of Frank Morgan. As the runners descended on mass towards the first summit of Allttaggart Morgan shook his head in disgust and claimed that is what you get when you ask a hotel manager to do a civil servants job.

Crudgington and Dickson take top spots

Tom Crudgington (Newcastle AC) was 1st home overall in 31.51 with a very well controlled whistle to scanner finish with Esther Dickson (Newry AC), in an impressive 21st position in 38.41, powering to victory in the ladies race. Luke Russell (unattached) 2nd overall in 34.25 and Joshua Mcatee (unattached) 3rd overall in 34.36 completed the male podium positions. Sarah Hanna (Mourne Runners) took the 2nd female podium position and 51st overall in 42.18 with Diane Wilson (Dromore AC) the 3rd female home in 61st position overall in a time of 43.02.

The standout race finish of the night involved Ryan McDonald (Newcastle AC), Jonathan Hobson (NI Mountain Running Association) and Mickey Flynn (Newcastle AC). With these three runners neck and neck approaching Frank Morgan's finish line it looked like McDonald would be caught but he managed to put in a Mo Farah like kick to leave Hobson and Flynn in his wake.

With Tom Crudgington taking overall first position he also managed to claim the first Male Junior position. Ethan McMullan (Newcastle AC) was second male junior home in 18th place taking in an impressive time of 38.25. The Female Junior category was taken by Ciara Savage (Newcastle AC) who came home in 86th place in a time of 46.20. Well done to all the junior competitors.

The Booley Boot Award Goes to?

Once the dust had settled and all runners returned safely the Task and Finish Group of Bogboy, The Prophet and Drumee Boris convened to reflect on who should be awarded the coveted Booley Boot award for their run of the race performance. A number of names came to the fore namely local man Pete Grant (Newcastle AC), Fermanagh native Max Carnson (unattached in his first ever Hill and Dale Race), Colum Campbell (Newcastle AC), Cologne native Inken Deichmann (unattached in his first ever Hill and Dale race) and the evergreen David Smyth (NI Mountain Running Association in his Showaddywaddy running shoes).

It was however, Sean Donnelly (unattached) who was 6th home overall in 35.54 that received the most votes, which brought a huge smile to The Prophet's face. When Bogboy asked The Prophet why he seemed so happy with this decision the response was "that is one from my training stable and the hard training yards over the other Leitrim's PlyRock are clearly paying off".

Prizegiving at the Newly Renovated Doran's Bar

As normal after the Rocky race Doran's Bar opened its doors to the Hill and Dale family for refreshments. Since the last Rocky race in 2019 Doran's Bar has undertaken renovations and now bolsters a very impressive lounge area extension. As is a custom a Hill and Dale Series mug was presented to the Doran's Bar owners to sit along the many collected from years previous.

Post race at Doran's there was some lengthy discussion from the local clientele around the arrangements for the 2022 Mayobridge Nun Run (10km), which historically saw the village of Mayobridge put on a road running spectacle around the townlands of Mayobridge and Burren. The word is that the Executive Committee, headed by Tom O'Hare Junior (BoM AC) are considering ratifying this event in the coming weeks. Runners should keep an eye out via relevant social media platforms and in the local South Down press for further details.

With Paul Fegan and Drumee Boris locked in conversation on pigeon racing and local undertakers Lively and Cunningham debating the price of red diesel it was left to the younger McVeigh to draw the Rocky 2022 proceedings to a close.

Thank you's and next up

With too many to name race directors the McVeigh brothers would like to thank all the volunteers and marshals for their help and assistance for making the race go so smoothly. Also a special thanks to Doran's Pub for their kind hospitality. This Thursday sees the Hill and Dale series move to Luke's Mountain with registration at Meelmore Lodge and the whistle going at 7.30pm sharp. Full body cover will be required for this race and the prize-giving after will be in the exclusive Avoca Hotel, Estate and Spa, Newcastle.

All the pre-race talk ahead of Race 6 in the series will certainly be along the lines of can Connell Nugent make it another 6.30pm arrival, can Rory McMullan actually remember to bring his running gear, will Bryansford man Hen Kelly finally put his toe to the line in 2022 and will Jack O'Hare charge to same £3.50 a pint as Doran's did? Only time will tell.



Photo 1 by Paul Fegan- Tom Crudgington (Newcastle AC)



Photo 2 by Paul Fegan – Esther Dickson (Newry AC)



Photo 3 by Paul Fegan- Max Carnson (unattached)



Photo 4 by Paul Fegan - Ciara Savage (Newcastle AC)