



Stornoway Running and Athletics Club

SENIOR NEWSLETTER – May & June 2018

Hello SRAC seniors it's a two for one bumper edition this month! Mainly because we were so busy at the end of May we forgot but hey it just means we've got lots of news and stories to share. May saw the biggest ever Stornoway Half marathon, trumping our 2010 record of most finishers! There has been lots of other racing including the HEBs and the LAMM in Harris, it's been a great sunny summer for the club and there is still more to come ☺

Stornoway's 2018 Half Marathon – a record breaker! (Gerry's report)

Whether it's the record numbers running, the fantastic weather or the bouncing ceilidh, this year's Stornoway half marathon was exceptional on many fronts.

It could have been through better use of marketing tools such as Facebook (apologies for the Donald Trump posts btw), an easy sign up process through

Entry Central or the increased popularity of the HEB3 or a mix of all 3, but for the only time in SRAC history the 2018 half marathon recorded a sell out. That's right; all 250 places were sold out by the start of April 2018 meaning that some folk had to suffer the anxiety of a waiting list.



Is it because I am starting to look older, and into these types of conversation, or is because there was a real genuine concern, that many people I bumped into the night before the race wanted to talk to me about the weather and how warm it was going to be? Suffice to say that when race day arrived the runners were greeted to a now typical, gloriously sunny May day in Stornoway. (I'm sure because I've said this that it will pour next year).

At the business end of the event the men's race was won by Aberdeen AAC's Will Mackay in a time of 1:13:23s followed by last year's winner Euan Crawford of HBT with third place going to William Bowers of Ochil Road Runners. For the women, 1st place went to Nicole Scott of Giffnock North AAC in a time of 1:32:12s; 2nd place Mairi Gudgeon and 3rd place to SRAC's very own Marina Murray. 1st Stornoway runner to cross the line was Andy Joyce in 5th place in a time of 1:21:42s which was OK considering the warm clammy weather. (Tempted to talk about the weather again but maybe could run a separate report on this for next month)

There was a lot of bustle, a lot of people and the atmosphere was just electric. The overall number of finishers for this year's event was an incredible 188! This is a new Stornoway half marathon record with our previous highest turnout being 165 in 2010.

In terms of SRAC runner participation, there were no less than 27 runners passing through the finish line wearing the red and gold. This must surely be up there as a club record too but nonetheless a testament to the fact that our club senior section is booming right now.

Another success story from the day was the post race buffet where we went back to the old format of asking club runners to cook soup, prepare rolls and bring along some home baking for the race finishers to try, as opposed to outsourcing the catering to a third party. This seemed to go down really well and it is the aim to continue down this route for next year.

Not forgetting the post race ceilidh. (Warning: Don't ever get up for an Orcadian Strip the Willow!!!) For the first time in a long while, the post race ceilidh was well attended with many of our island visitors and locals dancing into the wee wee hours to Tosh and Co's island band. The atmosphere was just brilliant and sets a good marker for us to build upon for next year. All ticket sales from the event going to Alzheimers Western Isles.

Let us not forget the many hours that go into organising an event of this magnitude. A big thanks must surely go out to the 2018 half marathon committee (you know who you are!) who have delivered a real high quality event to the island. Big thanks to our sponsors, Autoparts and all the many other island organisations who have supported the event; Rarebird, Lewis builders, Stornoway Port Authority and Police Scotland to name but a few. And finally, a big thanks to everyone who helped with the catering, marshalling, cyclists, timekeepers. The list goes on and on.



As a final point, it is our intention to make next year's event even ~~huuuuger~~ better and build upon all the good work of 2018. If you have some good ideas and are willing to put in a few hours graft please get in touch.

(Full race results can be found here - <https://srac.org.uk/results/>)

Benbecula half – Plan B (Adrienne's report)

The first Saturday in June a group of intrepid runners headed to the South Sea Islands to take part in the renowned Benbecula HM. As events unfolded the only thing that was missing from this great event was Benbecula itself. Our driver and leader for the day was Jim Bruce. We landed in Leverburgh only to be hit with the sad sight of no sight of the ferry. The mist devoured the seas, the mist devoured the ferry, the mist devoured the runners BUT it did not devour our grit and determination to run. Several options were discussed –option 1 required a plane and parachutes, option 2 required a flux capacitor and a DeLorean, option 3 was just silly and after much thought of getting an equally flat course to run the non Benbecula HM, option 4 was greeted with much delight and excitement. The Harrecula HM was born.

After much moving of cars, 20 enthusiastic runners began the HM at Scarista, hoping to arrive in Tarbert before high noon. The mist that left our ship in the Deep South was soon replaced by the blazing sun. If it wasn't for the tarmac, one would have thought that it was the Sahara desert, with the heat haze hovering in front of our eyes, making our imagination run wild, we saw hills, we saw more hills, how could this be? This was meant to be Harrecula. Just in time JB and Duncan arrived with much needed water for the dehydrated and

delirious runners. We were brought back to reality. The hills were like a downhill ski slope for some (Casky) and for others (the rest) they were Mount Everest. JB and Duncan were great support to all and offered many words of encouragementlike "where are the sausage rolls?"

The race finished at Tarbert school which happened to be the same finish line for the LAMM. Most of the runners finished jubilant, with smiles on their faces whilst others, well one, finished minus the smile!!!..Although in



retrospect, she did say it was the best event she ever did and can't wait for the Harris HM on 7th July. Cheers greeted the runners as they arrived in Tarbert as well as the now found sausage rolls. The remainder of the sausage rolls were sold to the LAMM finishers for 14p each or two for 27p. A great day was had by all. Thanks to JB and Duncan for driving back and forward many times, Duncan, JB and Hector for the water, Louise for making a million sausage rolls and Rick for the delivery of such and to all the runners for going along with the plan!
(Picture credit – Jim Bruce)

LAMM – Harris, the most brutally beautiful race (Norman's report)

The Lowe Alpine Mountain Marathon (LAMM) took place in Harris at the beginning of June, this was (probably) the biggest ever sporting event to take place in the Western Isles with over 700 folk taking part. What the flick is the LAMM?? Well it's an off-road mountain marathon that takes place in a different mountain range in Scotland each year (this was the 22nd edition). The race is a two day event where competitors have to be self-sufficient carrying a pack with enough grub for both days, a tent and sleeping bag for an overnight camp. You have to run in pairs and need to navigate your own way around the route, using your map reading skills and a compass. The map of the course and the coordinates of check point are only given to you when you start the race. The LAMM is broken down into 6 categories Elite, A, B, C, D and Score. The LAMM has a huge cult following so they barely need to advertise it. I have to admit when it was announced in Dec '17 that it would take place in Harris I had never heard of it and didn't really know what a mountain marathon was! Btw I could bore everyone to tears with LAMM banter, so bear with me! ☺

A few of the SRAC lads started chatting about this mysterious LAMM on our banter runs and decided screw it lets do it what's the worst that could happen, this is too good a race to miss! Myself and Jonny Pritchard entered category A, Murdo Alex and Gerry entered D, and Paul Hadley entered in the Score category with partner Emma. Jayne Miller and Mike Sullivan from our friends the Westside Runners also entered in category D. From around February we were down in the Harris hills almost every weekend getting to know the area and getting used to running on the rough terrain with a rucksack. We trained in the hills in all conditions, snow, wind, rain, sun and fog – we wanted to be ready for whatever we would face! As the race got nearer we were all really excited about this adventure, talk constantly buzzing about what the route could be, where would they send us!

Once race week came we knew the weather was going to be good, the forecast was for sun and heat. The race start was early on Friday morning so we travelled to Tarbert on Thurs night to register and have a cheeky pint, then had a great night camping at Horgabost. There were lots of different start times and locations, so when myself and Jonny turned up at Tarbert school in the morning we

had no idea where we would be starting! We were all corralled onto busses and it slowly made its way north in the Lewis direction. Eventually it pulled up at the Bowglass car park and we were relieved to be starting in a place we knew well. At registration they attached electronic dabbers to our wrists which you use at each checkpoint to record you were there, once we had dabbled for the first time we were given our maps and coordinates and set off. We had to mark our 11 check points for the day on the map and find them in order. Straight away I knew this would be tough they had us going over hills, ridges and boggy ground. Early on after check point 2 there was a wee surprise for our course with a short boat trip across Loch Langavat which was cool, but after this going was tough the heat was intense we had to make sure we ate plenty as we went and drank from the rivers and streams when we could. It seemed like every time we hit a climb the breeze disappeared and we were baked!

Some check points were hard to find, they hide them behind lumps and rocks but we managed to find them all. The midcamp we were working our way towards was at Cravadale up behind Hushinish. As we descended the final hill of the day with the midcamp in sight I heard a loud cry of "NORM!!!" from up on a ridge it was none other than young William Macrury who had come down to watch the race. I thought how on earth had he seen us from there about 1km away (there were lots of runners cutting about at this stage too). As he caught up and ran with us for the last couple of miles he explain he had heard Jonny's dulcet Weegie tone travelling far across the hills! We arrived at midcamp and finished day 1 in about 9 and a half hours, with about 25 miles covered. It was a relief to rest our weary legs and find our island friends for some banter. We fired up our stoves and prepared our dehydrated delights.



We all sat on the machair for a couple hours yarning about the days challenges, playing cards and enjoying banter with other campers – it was like a proper wee tent village. Gerry had an especially tough day with bad blistering problems on his feet and had to pull out before day 2, but Murdo was able to pair up with a lady for day 2 whose partner had also pulled out – much to her delight! Paul's partner Emma badly hurt her ankle on day 1 so unfortunately they couldn't start day 2. Jayne and Mike had a belter on day 1 and lay in 9th place in Cat D, first mix Vet team. Myself and Jonny were 15th in Cat A.

We all hit the machair early for some rest and were woken about 5.30am to the sound of the pipes (the lad was a competitor and the organisers had shipped them in) and fired up the stove again for some brekkie and we were off again. More coordinates for day 2 and more savage challenges! At the start of the day the worst happened the harr came in and visibility was very poor, I'm ok navigating by sight but my compass skills are average at best plus Jonny gets lost in Tesco. We farted about in the mist on the first few points but managed to find them then half way through the day it began to clear. The toughest part of was going up the Clisham from the west side via the horseshoe ridge first. This was a brutal long climb and the point we both suffered the most, our water ran out quickly and we were getting very dehydrated. Luckily Jonny has some salt tablets that



kept us going until we could stagger back down to a stream! We had one last ridge climb in the now blazing heat and then all of a sudden Tarbert appeared below us, we were so happy and got a big adrenaline rush thinking about all the sugary treats we were going to demolish. We finished day 2 in about 10 hours and covered roughly 23 miles, day 2 had more climbing so was much tougher!

We were greeted by Shona and Murdo at the finish line and those amazing SRAC sausage rolls thanks to Adrienne and Co (cheque's in the post)! The atmosphere was great at the finish as everyone congratulated each other and yarned about the stunning event. I have to say that my body has never felt so battered it was so brutal, in hindsight we were mad to enter Cat A for a first mountain marathon but this was a once in a lifetime event! Harris really showed itself at its best, the runners from all parts were amazed by the place. It turned out this was the last ever LAMM, the organiser announced at the prize giving he has wanted to go out with a special event. Massive kudos must go to the organisers the scale of the event is incredible it was organised perfectly with great respect shown to the area. Myself and Jonny finished 15th overall in Cat A. Mike and Jayne had another get day and finished 10th overall scooping up the 1st mix Vet team prize in Cat D!

It was a very special event, I'm not sure we'll see anything like it in the islands again and I'm not sure I'll rush to do another mountain marathon soon (I will one day for sure) think I'll stick to 'normal' hill racing for now! My advice for anyone looking at these events would be enter the lowest category for your first one, learn how to use a compass and read maps (well!) and invest in lots of very light gear. Plus wear tights – I had 27 ticks at the end of day 2!!

Here's a great wee vid a couple of competitors made of the event with drones, gives a good feel of the two days! <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Peh3HUWCAug>
(Picture credit – William Macrury)

Skye Half (Adrienne's report)

A group of SRAC athletes travelled to Skye for the wrong way round half marathon on 9th July. For some who have done this event for many years (when it was a 13.8 mile course) this was a bit confusing ...forgetting that the undulating hills were yet to come after the runners turned off the main road!! However the wrong way round for the first time Skye HM runners, proved a great success. The race started in Portree and because of the huge entry, it was a closed road event, heading up past Borve before turning off to "midge alley" and returning to Portree along the back roads. As in the previous two Heb 5 events, the sun shone and water was consumed by the gallon. We were welcomed at the finish line with a great medal and a bottle of Skye Gold. Incidentally, the medal makes a fine bottle opener for a thirsty runner!!! Well done all!

Place	Time	Name	Team	Category	Number	Chip	Grading
22	1:29:26	Andy McMahon	Sornoway R & AC	VM50-59	639	1:29:23	74.92
168	1:48:54	Paul Hadley	Sornoway R & AC	VM50-59	342	1:48:28	62.55
232	1:54:18	Ailison MacDonald	Sornoway R & AC	VF35-44	371	1:53:41	59.12
315	2:01:17	Adrienne Stewart	Sornoway R & AC	VF55+	880	2:01:07	65.53
573	2:21:26	Louise Henderson	Sornoway R & AC	VF45-54	369	2:20:24	50.22
602	2:24:39	Clare Falconer-Flint	Sornoway R & AC	VF45-54	288	2:24:09	49.11
635	2:30:25	Norma Macritchie Robb	Sornoway R & AC	VF35-44	775	2:29:47	44.93
663	2:34:29	Yvonne MacKay	Sornoway R & AC	VF35-44	527	2:33:51	44.47

Racing roundup

Andy McMahon, Paris Marathon, 3.39.10 – 08 April 2018 (Missed this in April sorry Andy!)

Carolyn Hare, Tiree Half Marathon, 2.14.29 – 05 May 2018

John MacAskil, Great Birmingham 10k, 39.01 – 06 May 2018

Karen Wright, Road to the Isles Half Marathon (Mallaig), 2.17.21 – 12 May 2018
Andy McMahon, Benromach 10k, 39.33 – 13 May 2018
Kym Bridle, Cape Wrath Challenge Marathon, 5.04.34 – 19 May 2018

Senior training

The Thursday Hill/Endurance session now meets at the new time of 6pm at the Golf Club car park.

Other news

Big congrats to former senior club captain Willie Macrury and his wife Marsaili who got married on star wars day May the 4th!

Minibuses to forthcoming events

The club has booked minibuses for travel to the following events:

Barrathon, Saturday 30 June

Berneray 10k, Saturday 14 July

Priority will be given to paid club members who will be eligible for a free seat. Non-members can book a seat for a small fee (to be confirmed). If you would like to book a seat on the bus for any of the above events, please email sracmembership@gmail.com ASAP to confirm which events you are hoping to travel to.

Races coming up

30 June	The Barrathon
07 July	Harris Half Marathon
14 July	Berneray 10k
14 July	The Golden Eagle Challenge, Harris
21 July	Stornoway Lifeboat Station 5k, 11am
28 July	Hebrides Triathlon
11 Aug	Skye Bridge 10k, Kyleakin, 12pm
18 Aug	Reinigeadal hill race – 12km
25 Aug	Calbost Classic 7 mile road race
25 Aug	2 Islands Half Marathon
01 Sept	Tong 5k Macmillan Cancer Support run/walk, 12pm
22 Sept	Westside Runners 5k and 10k

Happy Running , SRAC Senior Sub Committee