

## 2019 Gargrave Show Fell Race Report

Gargrave show fell races were hailed as a great success on Saturday despite the earlier worries over ground conditions created by the incessant rainfall on Friday. The height and flow of Eshton beck was closely monitored and the organisers took the decision very early on Saturday morning to divert the Under Nines and Twelves race away from the fast flowing river crossing, creating instead a flatter course more comparable to a cross country race.

Barlick Fell runner Isaac Reeday from Hetton finished strongly to take first place in the Under Nines race, whilst seven year old Robert Shuttleworth from Gargrave was in second place and claimed not only the first local prize but the McKell shield for the highest placed male competitor from any category. Mia McGoldrick from Giggleswick continued her fine form of recent wins carrying on a family tradition as her late maternal Grandma Karen Slater still holds the senior ladies race record at Gargrave show.

The under twelves race was a real battle for the first three places, but Barlick fell runner George Collins just had the edge over Wharfedale Harrier James Rosser. Libby Rickerby a member of Chorley AC won the girls race and was also in fourth place overall. Local honours went to Monty Carruthers and Emily Claxton.

The under fourteens, seventeens and seniors did however have the beck to cross but two ropes were securely attached and a corridor was effectively made for the competitors to safely navigate the first hurdle of the popular multi terrain race which takes in meadow, pasture, moor and woodland, before the pinnacle of Sharphaw is in their sights.

It was a family double for the Reedays as Jacob won the under fourteens race. Another rising star, Wharfedale Harrier Amelie Lane won the girls category and was also second overall, whilst Charlotte Wilkinson of Norwich Harriers also proved too good for some of the male counterparts finishing as second girl and third overall.

Finlay Grant from Buxton had a good run to finish first in the under seventeens race, despite running home with one shoe off, one shoe on!  
Eve Whittaker of Harrogate Harriers was first girl and Will Atkinson of Keighley and Craven AC was first local.

The legendary fell runner, Reg Harrison from Dalton in Furness was fortunately staying in the Village so he officially started the Senior race. Reg began his career in 1957 and went on to break twenty fell race records, locally he was the winner of the Kilnsey Crag race six times. He was renowned for his fearless descents despite breaking his leg early on his career, but by playing football not running!

There was a strong field of seventy eight competitors in the Senior race, many from the North West, but also from further afield including Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Hampshire and Scotland. However the race does attract runners from all over the world and this year included competitors from Zimbabwe, New Jersey and Hong Kong. Fifty seven year old Mark Reeves is a member of Athletic Veterans of Hong Kong and is primarily a track runner so a Yorkshire dales fell race was well out of his normal comfort zone. Mark has lived and worked in Hong Kong for thirty five years and was visiting his father in Wigglesworth so reaching the top off Sharphaw and experiencing the tranquillity of the show in general would be a world away from the pro-democracy protests affecting parts of Hong Kong.

Neither air miles nor age are a barrier when entering the show fell races, with the youngest competitor in their late teens to the oldest aged seventy four years. However it was youth who took the top rankings.

Junior international runner Joe Hudson won the Senior race in fine style, though Father Robert, himself a former winner was not that many places adrift. Harry Coates another former winner was in second place and Duncan Birtwistle last year's Malham show winner was in third.

Duncan competes successfully at international level in Orienteering competitions, his father John also decided to navigate this year's fell race course and despite start line misgivings he thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Eighteen year old Tom Barrett was first local male and fellow Keighley and Craven AC runner Katie Atkinson was not only first local lady home but first lady overall, a fine performance from them both having just moved up an age category. Katie also won the Weatherill shield for highest placed local female from any category.

An enjoyable afternoon of sport, only made possible by the hard working team who marked out the course in atrocious conditions on Friday evening and then diverted the two Juniors courses in the early hours of Saturday, all race marshals who so kindly give up their time to help with the event and most importantly the landowners for their kind permission and support.