

## 1. RACE SUB-COMMITTEE

We exit the race sub-committee's year in a very different (and far more positive) place than we entered it, with a very good 2023 behind us.

As we started the New Year, there was no race sub-committee or (lead) Race Organiser. With no exaggeration, as we passed through January, we were less than a week from declaring, through lack of manpower, a cancellation of the **Tay Ten** [TT] (and perhaps, in due course, the Brig Bash [BB]). A band of "we can't have this" volunteers formed and set to work. Despite this very late start, and partly thanks to the fantastically-detailed to-do list which was passed on from previous sub-committees, we managed to hold two very successful events.

The 2023 TT took place on the last Sunday of April (this being a slot that it will now seek to hold for 2024 and future years). This is later than its usual first-Sunday-in-April date, primarily to avoid a clash with the popular (and Scottish Championship) Tom Scott 10-miler. The window of opportunity is tight: we inevitably lose some runners to recovery from the London Marathon seven days earlier or to tapering for the Loch Leven Half a fortnight later.

Although run from the George Duncan track, the TT has traditionally *operated* from the Community Campus. This is annoyingly just a little further from the track than is convenient. Given our experience of organising the 2022 Hartley Relays, we moved our race HQ (registration, presentation, runner shelter and kit storage) to the Grammar School hall adjacent to the track. This proved highly beneficial and will be retained in future years.

We targeted entry sales of 350, in line with pre-COVID years. Initial sales were strong, but slowed beyond 200 places. To cement logistics, medal orders etc, we closed entries at 300 (although, ironically, we were then subject to late demand we couldn't fulfil). In 2024, we are confident of a return of demand for 350 places. Entries will open early in January to assist, and, for the first time, we will introduce (limited) refunds, transfers and a waiting list. We were delighted to welcome 228 runners on the day (the event record is 307 in 2017).

The winner of the men's category was again former PRR, Alistair Gudgin, in a time of 54:29 (just outside his course record of 2022). We witnessed a titanic tussle between him and Mark McGuire on the track's final straight, Alistair coming home barely a metre ahead after 10 nip-and-tuck miles. Ryan Donald of Dundee HH was third. In the female race, it was a repeat win for Alison McNeilly of Dundee Road Runners in 1:04:35: this was some way from the course record (Annabel Simpson's 59:21) but set a new F40 course best. Jade Greenshields (Five Star Active) and Gemma Dolan (Dundee HH) were second and third female finishers.

The Tay Ten provided £1500 to PRR club coffers. It remains our key 'cash cow' for funding wider club activities (especially trophies, internal races, XC entries). The sub-committee looked hard at a reduction in entry fees, but, especially in a world of rising costs, elected to maintain entry fees at £15/£17 (for SA members and not, respectively). We plan to maintain those fees again in 2024 (see below).

The sub-committee took not a breath before turning their full attention to organising the 24<sup>th</sup> **Brig Bash** (our 25<sup>th</sup> birthday) on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July (in fact, with entries opening 48 hrs after the TT is held, organisation of the two races very much now overlaps). With very few flat 5 mile races available in Scotland – and with the BB increasingly taking on a 'must-do' image in the Scottish race calendar - we were confident this would be as popular as ever. We were not disappointed: the race sold out (300 places) inside a week and well advance of the closing date.

The race was memorable, both in itself and for the level of 'buzz' afterwards at the annual 'spread' (mega-tea). Jamie Crowe of Central AC destroyed (by 33 seconds) the 23-year-old course record to set a new best of 23:30 (that's 4:42 a mile!), and also set a new record for the BB Mile (4:20). In what was the fastest-ever men's race overall, James Donald (Dundee

HH) and John Lenehan (Edinburgh AC) were second and third respectively. The ladies' race saw no course records, but 1-2-3 of Gayle Lindsay (PH Racing, 30:41), Alison McNeilly (Dundee RR) and Kerry Gibson (Fife AC). Pamela Pattison of Pitreavie AC set a new F70 course record.

The Brig Bash has always been – and remains – daftly good value-for-money (entry fees in 2023 were £10/£12). This year, it provided a modest ~£500 to PRR club coffers. This superb value is made possible, in quite some part, by the generosity of PRR members in providing the (vast majority of the) 'spread'. We plan to maintain those same fees again in 2024 (see below).

The two races – now both seeing earlier-in-the-year progress than for some years – are likely to see a number of changes and improvements in 2024:

- The **TT course** will be slightly altered. Over the years, the Ruthvenfield 'chicane' has become busier with traffic (mainly as Bertha Park grows and as it provides a 'rat run' to the A85). This now represents an objective hazard to runner safety, which, quite apart from that risk itself, no longer meets with SA approval and thus granting of either race permit or insurance. An excellent re-routing back to the cycleway has been tested and discussed with PKC; it provides a flat, fast, convenient and safe alternative to the chicane and is now very likely to be officially measured, consented and utilised.
- **Chip timing** will be dropped (at both races). The cost (£900 per race) appears unnecessary in a world where race timing apps have become highly effective. We have extensively tested (ie dress-rehearsed) Webscorer.com (at both the Brig Bash and Mob Match), are highly impressed and are convinced of its success at our open races in 2024.
- This significant cost saving (at both races) will provide a blend of (ie some £250-£300 of each of) **elevated prize money** (to raise the status and field of the race), a **greater boost to club funds** and **the ability to hold race entry fees constant** at a time of rising costs.
- We are also looking at the introduction of 'iconic'/unique prizes for race and age category winners (mainly at the BB).
- **BB entries** will (probably) be extended to 325 and **TT entries** (as above) to 350.
- The **introduction of a "young athletes" category** (17-19 inclusive at the TT, 16-19 at the BB) to boost entries in this age category.
- **Age category record prizes** will be introduced (at both races). This is enabled by our having compiled a full listing of the best times across all age groups across the history of both races. These awards will be almost unique in Scottish club races and are hoped (over time) to boost attendance and field quality.
- **Catering** (albeit limited) will be introduced to the TT. Currently, runners can find no sustenance at (or anywhere near) the race. We are working with the GDAA/Live Active to allow contracted catering facilities (eg coffee gazebo, hot food van etc) to be in operation.
- **'Operation Cludgie'**: the Brig Bash has made its home at the Bridge of Earn Institute (BoEI). For the field of 300+ runners we host, there is an uncomfortable insufficiency of toilets, necessitating Portaloo hire each year (at a cost of £300+). We are now investigating/working with BoEI and two local (utility) community funds to see whether additional loos can be installed/'invested in', to the benefit of all.

I would echo the wise words of RO Kev Riddell last year: these events simply would not - and cannot - go ahead without the support of our volunteers. Huge thanks are extended to everyone who helped make both races such a success. As usual, we received very positive feedback from participants about how much they enjoyed the races and plenty of comments about how encouraging and friendly the marshals were. In particular, I would like to thank the members of the sub-committee, whose efforts made sure everything went (just about)

smoothly: that's Jimmy Fotheringham, Duncan Ryan, Claire Douglas, Lisa Aikman, Rhona Younger, Kenny Cairns, Sue Bothwell, Sally Newton, Caroline Duffin and Paige Brown. It is excellent that all these members of the sub-committee have elected to return for 2024; all are already engaged in work for the coming races. Yvonne Bryson stepped down after the 2023 Tay Ten: we thank her greatly for her efforts over the years.

The annual **Mob Match** (see above) vs Kinross RR has now become a sizeable fixture in our calendar. With almost 100 participants this year – and perhaps more in 2024 – the sub-committee will now become more involved in the organisation of this race. We even have a low-key sponsorship of the race by Irn-Bru!