

13th APPLECROSS DUATHLON

The course for the Applecross Duathlon is superb: visually spectacular and full of challenge. But it has one problem, the prevailing wind! Most of the cycle route runs south down the exposed coast road. On 17 September, competitors faced a brisk south-westerly, forecast at 14 mph but probably around 20 mph much of the time. Folk were peddling hard to make speed downhill. But there is one Applecross regular who thrives in such conditions, Graham Scobie. The last time the wind blew with similar strength was back in 2007 when a youthful Graham astonished his fellow competitors by setting a new course record, 2.53.27. His time on Saturday was even better, 1.48.26, a personal best. Graham joins three other two time winners: Adam Ward 2005 & 2008, Al Anthony 2006 & 2013 and Ewan Taylor 2014 & 2015.

Happily the wind was about the only aspect of Saturday's Duathlon that attracted criticism. 145 took part (!03 in the Race - 42 in the Challenge) and all seemed to enjoy themselves. There was much encouraging feedback, well summarised by one competitor,

"Thank you for another fantastic day out on the Applecross peninsula. The duathlon has become a firm favourite in the family calendar and this one certainly didn't disappoint. As ever, the low key, friendly approach of everyone involved in supporting and organising made for a lovely atmosphere and is no doubt attributable to all the hard work and organisation that had gone on beforehand".

Graham Scobie wasn't the only multiple Applecross Duathlon winner to succeed on Saturday: Claire Gordon, 2.08.47, won the Open for the third time; Stuart Whittle, 1.57.50, added the Super Vet title to his Vet win in 2014, Beth Morrow (age 14), 2.44.27 successfully defended the Junior trophy and mum, Gill, 2.29.33, added her first Super Vet title to her 3 consecutive Vet titles. In fact only three titles went to first time winners, reflecting how many entrants support the event on a regular basis. The new winners were: Stephen Burns, 1.50.20 and, Megan Mowbray, 2.12.19, both Vets, and Sandy Dunn 2.32.15, Vintage.

No matter how often an event has run there will always be unforeseen contingencies. This year it was an e mail at 9pm on Friday,

"Hi Gerry - my daughter and I are entered in tomorrow's challenge and are having a few issues. We flew into Inverness and had hired a car and bikes. The car I hired wasn't available and the alternative wasn't able to fit the bike rack or fit bikes inside so cutting a long story short - we are without bikes. We would still like to run at least but if we do might have to hitch a lift back to the start with a friendly Marshall if possible? And a real long shot if anyone has a couple of spare women's bikes - I am 5'4 and my daughter 5'6 we would be very grateful. Thanks, Julia"

Two replacement bikes, borrowed from the wives of the Race Director and the Race Organiser, transported in Andy Howett's van, were delivered to Transition by 11 am on Saturday.

So a big thanks to Rhona, Rosemary and Andy. Thanks, also, to all the 60 or so folk who are involved in supporting the Applecross Duathlon, all on a voluntary basis.

Particular thanks are due to Ruaridh Cameron and the Applecross Community Hall committee for allowing us free insurance cover and free use of the hall and community bus. We are also fortunate to receive generous help with prizes from Square Wheels bike shop, in Strathpeffer, and three Applecross Businesses: the Coal Shed gift shop, the Walled Garden bistro and the Applecross Inn. Some of our competitors have remarked that, with a £6 entry fee, the Applecross Duathlon is the best value of any event in Scotland. It is the generosity of those mentioned above that makes this bargain possible.

Gerry McPartlin