

## BE INSPIRED

As stated in this year's spring magazine we plan to do a series of articles that will hopefully encourage others to "have a go". The theme this time is:

### Never too Old

*Barry Blyth - English Fell Running champ at 65*



Figure 1 Keswick World Masters 2005

Coming from the South Barry admits that he didn't know what a Fell was until "middle" age! Never a serious runner in his younger days, even though he won a Bedfordshire schools mile and represented them at national schools cross country level, rather it was Rugby that was Barry's main sport aged 10 to 30 representing school; Uni and Macc at 1<sup>st</sup> team levels). He also refereed for 8 yrs.

Barry joined Macc Harriers in his late 40's. But it wasn't until he turned 50 that he started to compete mainly off road (cross country and fell) and regularly coming 1<sup>st</sup> in his age category. In 1998 he had a go at the London Marathon managing 2.56 (a top 10 finish in his age category).

But it was the informality, adventure and sociability of fell running that appealed more than "road". Pals encouraged Barry to have a go at some of the challenges that the sport throws up, such as the Bullock Smithy (56 miles); Mountain Marathons and the Bob Graham round. Previously he'd thought of these as "nutty" challenges as there's so much unpredictability. But as he found on the first of these 'eating and drinking regularly' ensured he completed the last 36 miles.

When asked about the championship races Barry said it was "Craig Harwood who encouraged him to 'have a go'". The first of these was back in 2005 when he came 9<sup>th</sup> in the V55 - 60 category at the World Masters Mountain running champs in Keswick. When he turned 60 Barry had a go at the English and British race series coming 3<sup>rd</sup> in both. Dave Tait of Dark Peak won both. It would be 5 / 6 years later that Barry turned the tables. Barry recalls 'it was a very competitive peer group; in one race of ca 50 mins the 1<sup>st</sup> 6 all finished within 2 mins. I had great respect for all these guys who had been fell running for years'.

So how was all this possible?

There's no straightforward answer says Barry "the right physiology and mental stubbornness helps" and "coming late to running gave me some longevity". Barry runs 3 or 4 times a week, so has never done great mileage, but typically exercises 6-7 times a week (including gym; badminton; ballroom dancing). But he also says 'chance played a part' as did 'the encouragement of others'. "I did what I was capable of and am happy with that and the plaudits from my mates". "In the same way having supported "couch to 5k" runners and seen the buzz they get from doing their 1<sup>st</sup> 5k there's no difference; goal achieved. Similarly you have to admire the guy at the back of a race busting a gut to beat the guy ahead. If he fails at least he's made someone happy and there's always next time!"

All being well Barry will have another go at becoming champion again when he hits 70!

Graham Brown