

2012 REPORT

In spite of the rather wild conditions, 107 folk, ranging from 12 to 75 years of age, took part the 9th Applecross Duathlon – 60 in the Race and 47 in the Challenge. Adverse weather is a contingency that can be anticipated but the event organiser must always be ready for the unexpected. On the morning before the event I went round to Arrina to set up the changeover, to find a herd of Highland cattle happily grazing on the transition area. Hammering in the posts with a cow and calf watching me from a few feet away was an interesting experience. Fortunately, by the following afternoon they had moved to fresh pastures but not without leaving their legacy (must remember to include cow poo in next year's safety plan / risk assessment).

Applecross enjoyed the best weather in Britain during the summer. Local folk cannot recall a dryer period and I had the novel experience of walking through areas of "bog" and hearing it crunching under my feet. But all good things come to an end. September brought wind and rain. On the day of the Duathlon the streams were high, the bogs were just that and there was a 20mph southerly hammering the cyclists. All had to peddle hard even to go downhill and some strong men were reduced to pushing their bikes uphill. The adverse conditions prompted a number to swap, on the day, from the Race to the Challenge, fearful that the later Race start would put them at risk of missing the legendary post event Tea. A wise decision since the home baked Brownies and other goodies were more abundant than ever – many thanks to all those who contributed.

In spite of the adverse weather there were some excellent times recorded. David Wilby won the Garry Innes trophy for the Men's Open in 1hr 55mins, less than 5 minutes outside the record (will anybody ever take this from Adam Ward?). Eilis MacKechnie, on her first attempt, won the Ladies' Open in 2hrs 21mins – this in spite of a bloody knee and a shock from an electric fence before the start (something else to include in next year's safety notes). But perhaps the day's outstanding effort was by Harry Hurst, age 15, who won the Junior trophy with a time of 2hrs 17mins.

The Men's Vet section is always fiercely contested. This year's first 3 were just 3 minutes apart, Grant Baxter taking the trophy in 2hrs 6 mins. Sandra Rathjen is one of several "regulars" from Hunters Bog Trotters and this year her persistence was rewarded with the Ladies Vet trophy in a time of 2hrs 36mins. The greatly prized "Old Farts" trophy for Vintage (over 60) entrants was won by Alan Fulton in 2hrs 56mins.

A great event was followed by Tea and prize giving in the community hall and later in the day many stayed on to enjoy an evening in the camp site Flower Tunnel, the famous Applecross Inn or the atmospheric Walled Garden where 50 of us enjoyed superb hospitality and a delicious dinner – thank you John and Elaine and your charming team.

The event depends on the goodwill and support of several agencies, particularly the Applecross Trust, the Applecross Community Hall committee and the Torridon and Kinlochewe Mountain Rescue Team. Thanks are also due to the Applecross Inn and the Walled Garden Bistro for the generous prizes they donated and to Square Wheels for their long standing and invaluable support of the event. If you are into cycling and

haven't visited Steve MacDonald's wonderful bike shop, in Strathpeffer, you should try to do so. Failing that you can visit <http://www.squarewheels.biz/>.

Above all thanks are due to the more than 30 volunteers who assist in various ways, contributing to the friendly atmosphere noted by so many competitors and making possible the very low entry fee of £6.

Next year's (10th) Applecross Duathlon will be on Saturday, 14 September. On line entries will open on Saturday, 1 June.