

## Wallace wins but women show up well on the West Highland Way

THE TIME was 3am, Saturday June 18; the place, Milngavie railway station. A few flash photographs, a shout from the starter, and 20 brave souls set out on the first official running of the West Highland Way Race bound for Fort William 95 miles away.

The way was opened in Autumn 1980, and is usually walked in five days or more. It was inevitable that someone would want to run it, and in 1985 Duncan Watson (now race organiser) and Bobby Shields set the unofficial record time of 17 hours 48 minutes.

This year the race was given official status, sponsorship was sought and gained, and enquiries flooded in. Twenty-seven entries were accepted, some others reluctantly being rejected due to lack of experience (it's hardly a fun-run).

A misty dawn was breaking as the runners, from all over Britain, went through Carbeth at four miles. By Drymen, 12 miles in about 35 minutes separated first and last and the rapidly rising sun gave pointers to the glorious day ahead. Time was obviously not of the essence for everyone as one group of four runners stopped for a 20 minute breakfast of bowls of cereal and rolls.

The most piercing memory of Rowardennan (26 miles) was the clouds of midges which all but obscured the face of Bobby Shields (this year a helper), and even the 5 mph pace could not outrun them. The first check-point was Inverarnan at the top of Loch Lomond, and the leader by now was David Wallace, running with an economical style. Runners who, as advised, had arranged their own back-up support were beginning to benefit enormously in terms of special drinks, food, change of clothes (and a hat), as the late morning sun beat down relentlessly.

At Crianlarich, 46 miles and almost half-way, the final positions of Wallace, Betty Hall (no relation) and Duncan Watson were established. As he came off Rannoch Moor at Blackrock Cottage (69 miles), Wallace's opening words were, "Well, only a marathon to do now". He looked fresh having eaten little but drunk vast quantities of coca cola (where did all the gas go?).

The final check-point was Kin-



Ouch! Falling on scree is a highly painful experience as Peter Baxter of Westerlands Cross Country Club will testify. He felt the bruises and bumps for days afterwards. Picture: Peter Devlin.

lochleven (15 miles to go) but unfortunately the advance publicity had missed here, the few passers-by being totally oblivious to the heroic feat being undertaken. Mind you, some of the runners by this time were oblivious to Kinlochleven. For safety reasons, after Lundavra the race route follows the road to Fort William, along the High Street, and finishes at the Nevisbank Hotel.

The sun was setting as Wallace, from Edinburgh, appeared round the final bend in the road. The time was 7.18pm hours and 18 hours and 18 minutes since he started. Betty Hall, still smiling, was second in 19 hours 43, with Duncan Watson third and Sylvia Watson fourth in 20-14 and 21-40 respectively. Fourteen completed the race, nine beating 24 hours, and the three women starters finished in the top seven places.

The presentation of prizes took place on the Sunday afternoon. Each of the finishers received a specially produced pottery flask and an "I Ran The West Highland Way" T-shirt. Many have already shown an interest in next years event. If you are, contact Duncan Watson at 0397 5704. Remember it's not so much a race as a challenge to complete.

James Hall

## Simmer Dim is summer highlight

BRITAIN'S most northerly half marathon took place on June 25 - or more precisely June 26 as it started at midnight in Lerwick in the Shetland Isles - and had the apt title of the "Simmer Dim" race, writes Henry Muchamore.

Held just two days after Midsummer's Day, the organisers, Shetland Road Runners Club, hoped that runners would see both sun set and sun rise in the one event. However, overcast skies gave that grey twilight that many of us run in back on the mainland, although it was quite humid and a light breeze meant most pleasant conditions for tackle this very undulating course with quite long climbs and steep descents.

From the start the forty stalwarts were led off by Shetland's travelling postman, veteran Bill Adams (41), and after a mile he was virtually out of sight from the main pack. The only additional hazard on the course were a few late night "boozers", who needless to say had a few comments to make about how high knees should be raised.

It was certainly a night for the older runner, with the ages of the first seven home reading 41, 40, 39, 39, 49, 53, 57. Bill Adams finished in an excellent time of 76-26, followed

by new vet Laurie Redfern 81-23. First lady was Jackie Nuttall in tenth place (also a vet) in a very creditable 99-19.

The event had an international flavour, with runners from both Holland and Sweden taking part. By the time all 40 finishers were safely over the line, and the presentations duly completed, there was a lovely morning sky - ideal for an early run but at 3am everyone was happy to retire to bed.

The inaugural event will certainly be repeated and is a very attractive holiday run to supplement the wonderful scenery and wild life that Shetland has on offer.

This year sees the British Milers Club celebrate its 25th anniversary, and the annual seminar/training weekend will be held at Jordanhill College on October 22-23.

Guest speakers will include Tommy Boyle, Harry Wilson, Malcolm Brown, David Hemery and Frank Horwill, the founder member of the British Milers Club.

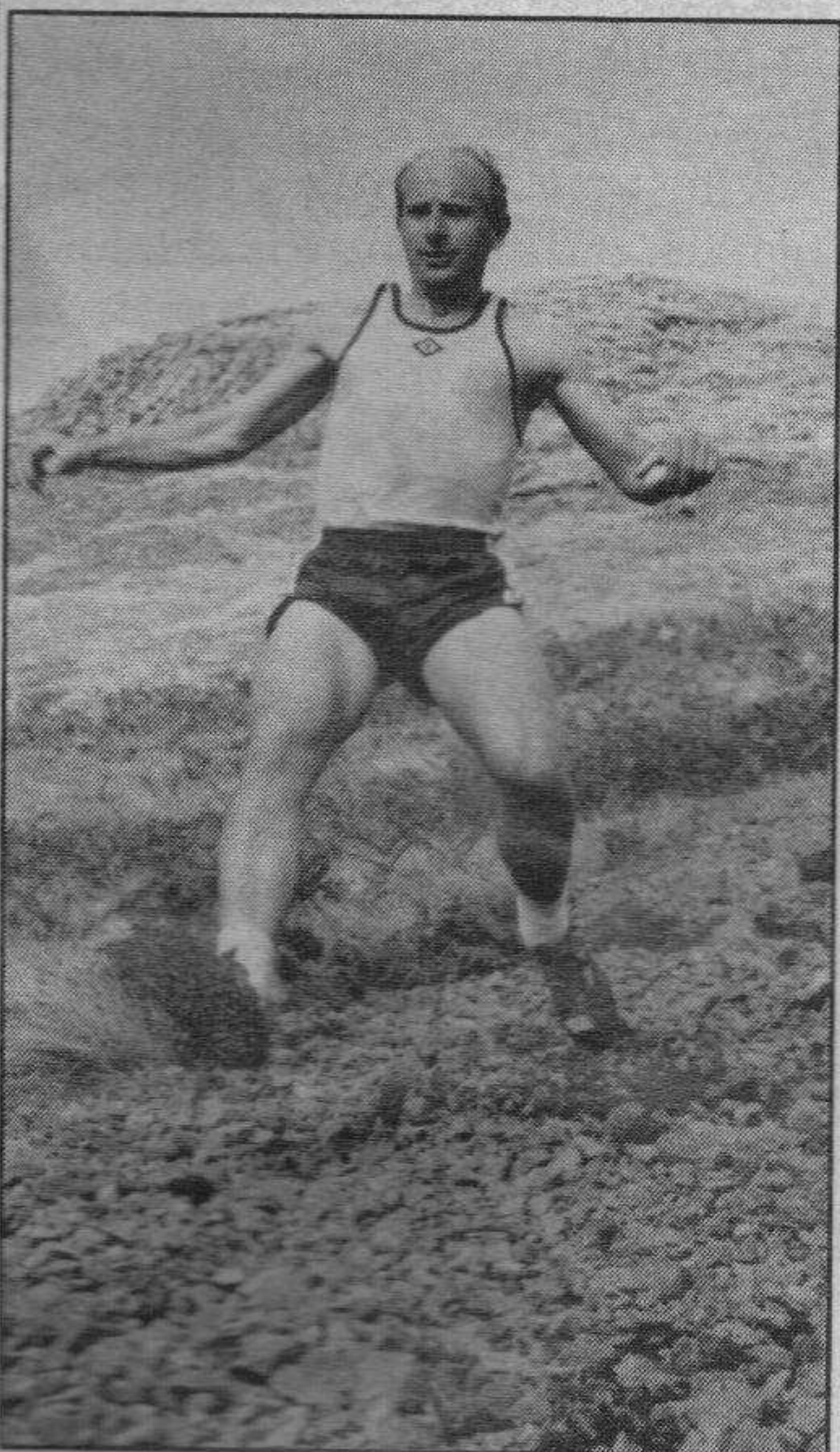
More details and application forms are available from Lachie Stewart or David Nugent.

# A Run Across

LAST SEASON was the tenth anniversary of Westerlands Cross Country Club, and the general opinion of the club members was that this particular anniversary should be celebrated in some fashion. The club had been started by a small group of Glasgow University graduates and, although not boasting a large membership, has grown in number over the years to represent a wide spectrum of running interests and abilities. In recent years a small but thriving ladies section has been established.

A considerable hill running influence has also developed within the club so, not surprisingly, the suggestion of an attempted coast to coast relay across the Scottish Highlands this May was enthusiastically received. Starting at Oban railway station on the west coast, and finishing at Montrose railway station on the east, the proposed route of approximately 180 miles would mainly follow minor roads and rough tracks, but would pass through some remote exposed regions where navigational skills would be required in bad weather. The added challenge of completing the relay within 24 hours appeared attractive, but rather improbable considering the potential difficulties likely to be encountered.

By dividing the route into 20 stages of differing terrain and distance, every club member had an opportunity to participate and eventually 32 took up the challenge. In the initial period of planning during the winter months, the weekend of May 21-22 was selected as the most suitable. A starting time 10.30pm on the Friday evening would allow maximum advantage



*Westerlands Cross Country Club in Glasgow's West End recently celebrated their tenth anniversary with a run across Scotland, from Oban to Montrose. It seems a long way to go for a pint, but even worse when you arrive and miss closing time by eight minutes!*

*Club member Ian Struthers relays the story of the 24 hour marathon for Scotland's Runner.*

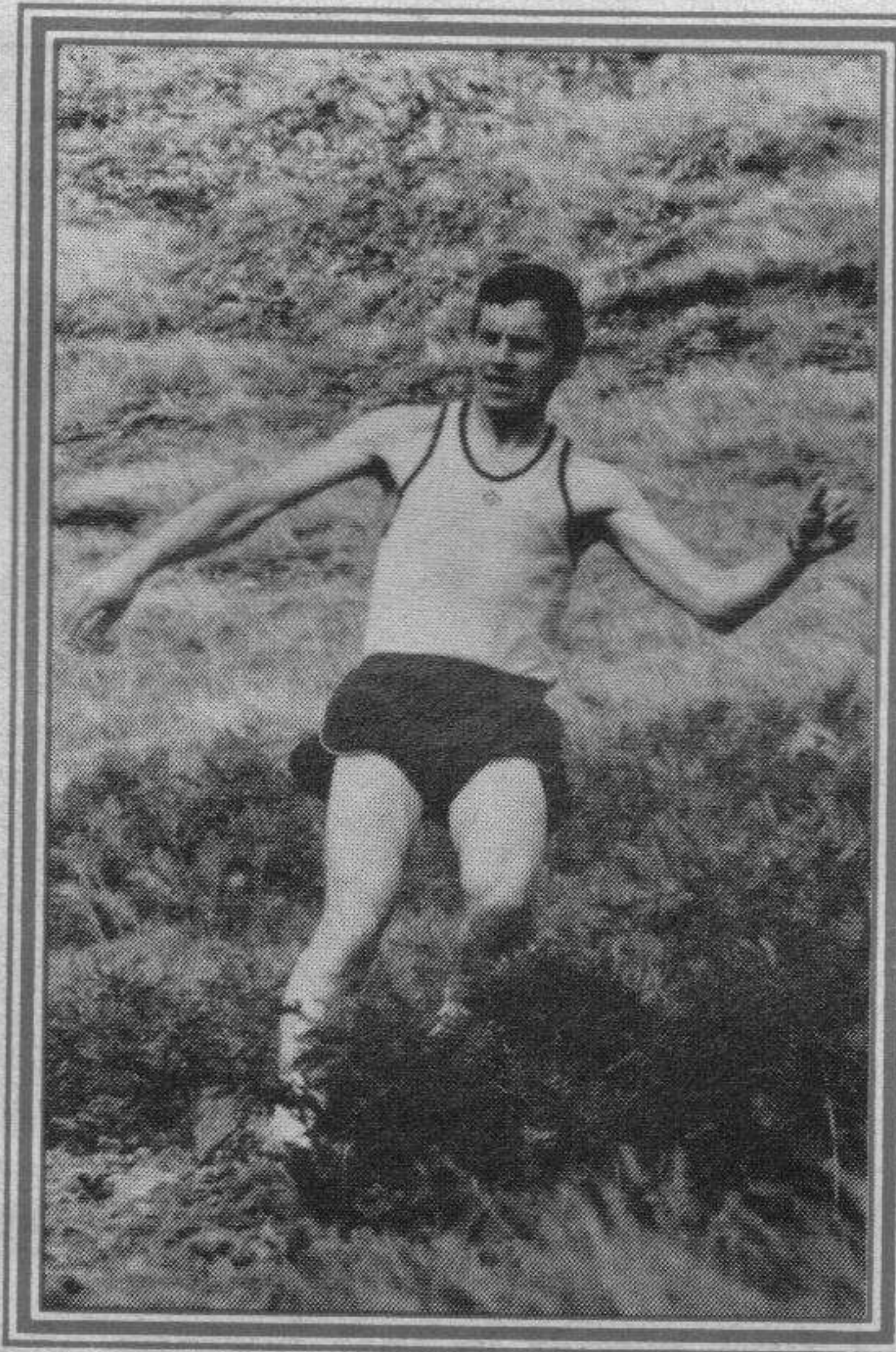
of the weekend, while ensuring that the stages over higher, featureless, ground were likely to be completed in daylight.

To assist organisation, an estimated time schedule was prepared for completion of the route in 24 hours, giving the expected starting and finishing times of each stage. In addition the twenty stages were grouped into five sections, each with a supervising coordinator.

In the final weeks of preparation, some stages likely to cause difficulties with navigation were reconnoitred. Perhaps appropriately, a wooden spoon was selected as the relay baton, allowing a small plastic digital clock to be attached for accurate time keeping of the individual stages. Joanna Calder and Sally Struthers, the wives of two club members, were recruited as overall coordinators. Based in Glasgow, they would monitor the progress of the relay and maintain regular contact by telephone with the section co-ordinators.

As expected, in the final week there were a few late withdrawals, but fortunately no major reorganisation of runners was required. So, after work on a fine Friday evening, the first group of runners left Glasgow by car bound for Oban.

In the failing light and overlooked by MacCaig's Folly on Battery Hill, Colin Aldridge, John Wellings and Bob Cant started on schedule at 10.30pm. Leaving brightly lit streets behind, they climbed the steep winding road out of Oban past Glencruitten to the first changeover at the isolated road junction leading to Glen Lonan. They completed this initial three mile road stage in 22 minutes, three



minutes ahead of the prepared time schedule, handing over to Quinton Blane for a 10 mile road stage through Glen Lonan. By now darkness had fallen, but in moonlight Quinton followed the lonely undulating road past scattered farms and their rough pasture, finally descending towards the lights of Taynuilt village.

The changeover for Stage Three was a short distance along the main A85 road near suspension footbridge over the River Awe. Here Dave Calder and Dave Thom were preparing for their 21.5 miles through mostly uninhibited country. Quinton arrived at 11.58pm, twelve minutes ahead of schedule, and the two Daves set off along the side of Loch Etive past the solitary houses at Glenoe and Inverliever to the entrance of Glen Kinglass.

The track now turned inland through the wooded lower reaches of the glen, before gently rising past unoccupied Glen Kinglass Lodge into a more barren landscape. In the clear night sky the temperature had fallen and a ground frost was developing. The two Daves were becoming tired as they climbed the now rocky path which led onto a desolate moorland watershed where a suspension footbridge crossed the River Kinglass. However, once across the watershed the track improved and they made better progress past Loch Dochard and the isolated house at Clashgour, heading towards Victoria Bridge and a welcome changeover.

To the occupants of the waiting car, the two Daves appeared to have aged when they arrived at 3.48am, considerably behind schedule. In the early dawn, with a blanket of

mist over Loch Tulla, Aldridge, Wellings and Cant were glad to be moving for warmth as they followed the West Highland Way the short distance of Auch, which was reached at 4.42am.

The carload of runners for the next three stages had arrived in Bridge of Orchy at 2.40am. Having spent nearly two hours of sleepless torment waiting in the car, Alisdair Campbell and Archie Cameron finally departed from Auch 52 minutes behind schedule on the 11.5 mile stage to Glen Lyon. Their route passed under the large railway viaduct spanning Auch glen, then travelled through the narrow glen before climbing grazing on the higher ground.

Descending to Loch Lyon, the ground became more difficult as they contoured across seemingly endless hillside towards the dam and the tarmac road leading down Glen Lyon. However, when the changeover at the dam was finally reached at 6.43am, there was no sign of the support car. As Alisdair and Archie waited with increasing agitation, a chance encounter with two fishermen informed them of a car with three occupants drinking tea parked at a reservoir four miles down the road. Eventually, when the mistake with the changeover had finally been realised, the support car continued up Glen Lyon to meet Alisdair and Archie at 7.25am.

After only five stages the relay was 95 minutes behind schedule. Emerging from the car and peeling off his tracksuit, Donald Branney started back down the road with sunlight streaming into the glen. Enclosed by high hills he arrived in Innerwick at 8.27am, where Isabel Coombs and Anne McDonald were waiting.

As they climbed out of Glen Lyon on the hillpath above Innerwick, Isabel and Anne were glad to have escaped the relentless recriminations after the earlier misunderstanding. Crossing over to the broader Rannoch valley, they descended through Rannoch forest to Carie on the shore of Loch Rannoch, then followed the road to Kinloch Rannoch. Despite being tired from a sleepless night, they completed the 10.5 miles in 98 minutes, entering Kinloch Rannoch at 10.05am.

Having driven up on the Friday evening and camped overnight in Kinloch Rannoch, the next party of runners were fresh after a reasonable nights sleep. Taking over, Maureen O'Neill and Jane Robertson covered 10.5 miles of de-

# Scotland

hydrating road which took the relay through pleasant woodland scenery dominated by the rocky pyramid of Schiehallion and past Tummel Bridge to Tressait on the north shore of Loch Tummel. Here Helen McPherson, Pat McLaughlan and Alison Graham had some initial route finding difficulties before locating the hillpath leading the seven miles over heather moorland to Blair Atholl, where they arrived at 12.39pm.

Deep in the Central Highlands, the relay was still 89 minutes behind schedule. Although his intended running partner had withdrawn a few days before because of injury, Ken White looked remarkably cheerful as he started alone on 22 miles of track through Glen Tilt to Linn of Dee. Passing hill walkers gave him the illusion of speed as he progressed up the long steep glen to reach an extensive bare moorland wilderness, which finally led to White Bridge over the River Dee, and the last few weary miles of his stage.

The weather was hot and sunny and the waiting group were enjoying some relaxed sun bathing although Pat O'Kane, who would be running the next stage, appeared curiously apprehensive. Perhaps he was remembering the previous year when the club's attempt at the Glasgow to Fort William relay had failed in confusion and disorganisation. However, after a fine run the reliable Ken arrived exactly when expected, having taken 173 minutes from Blair Atholl.

Once on his way, Pat was more relaxed as he settled into a steady five and a half minute mile pace along the seven miles of road to Braemar, where he joined the main A93 road for the final two miles to Auchallater. He arrived at 4.21pm, to be greeted with rapturous applause from a group of schoolgirls from Easterhouse who happened to be nearby. His time of 49 minutes was five minutes faster than anticipated for the stage. More was to come on the next stage.

Mark Rigby and Sandy Bennet were running Stage 14, which followed the centuries-old route up Glen Callater and over Tolmount into Glen Doll, a distance of 12.5 miles. The previous year Mark had won the Goat Fell and Angus Munros hill races, but a recent foot infection had interrupted his running. He showed no ill effects as Sandy pushed the pace up the track past Loch Callater and deep into Glen Callater before climbing the

encroaching hills to reach high ground east of Tolmount. Although the scene of several tragedies during winter storms, in the benign weather conditions prevailing they enjoyed exhilarating running across this exposed region crossing patches of lingering snow to reach Jock's Road and the gradual descent through forest into Glen Doll.

The next group of runners had just arrived at Glen Doll car park, thinking they had plenty of time, when down the track raced Mark and Sandy to hand over the baton at 6.04pm. Their time of 103 minutes was 17 minutes quicker than expected, reducing the overall time deficit to 64 minutes. Although initially taken by surprise, Andy Freer and John Tolmie were soon in full flight down the narrow road through upper Glen Clova, while a small village of Westerlands tents was appearing in the Glen Doll camp site. In bright evening sunlight they reached the peaceful hamlet of Clova at 6.26pm.

Now nearing the eastern boundary of the Highlands, the final hill stage of twelve miles climbed out of Glen Clova and over a featureless range of hills into Glen Esk at the start of the road which would eventually lead to Montrose. On the steep path above Clova Inn, Tony Ritchie and Ian Struthers were soon reduced to walking pace as they slowly gained height, finally reaching Green Hill summit cairn. However, once on the summit plateau there was some fine running across the stunted vegetation to Muckle Cairn, followed by a gradual descent through eroded moorland to Cairn Lick and the good track leading steeply down to Loch Lee. Following the track along the shore, they reached the changeover in the car park near Lock Lee Kirk at 8.12pm.

Just 27 miles from Montrose the relay was only 37 minutes behind schedule, but with some alarm it was soon realised that there was no sign of the support car with the final group of runners. While Ian waited at the car park, Tony set off along the road through Glen Esk, hoping to encounter the car further down the glen. Meanwhile, the support car was returning to Glen Esk after exploring the final stages of the route to Montrose, but had underestimated the unexpectedly good progress which the relay was making in the favourable weather conditions. Much to his relief, Tony finally met the car coming up the glen just outside Tarfside at 8.42pm.



Scrambling through the bracken, above, are club members Heather McPherson, David Calder, Ian Struthers and Sandy Bennet. On the far left is Quinton Blane.

Continuing down the road past Tarfside, Bill Sheridan, one of the club's founder members, ran a couple of sub six minute miles to help regain the momentum which had temporarily been lost. Then Alex Blakely took over and, in the fading light, covered the next seven miles through the quiet glen to Auchmull farm. Mist was gathering on the surrounding hills when he reached the changeover at 9.36pm.

Now passing through more domestic scenery, John McLellan and Tom Donohue finally left Glen Esk and the Angus hills behind and, crossing the neighbouring flat lowland countryside on a never ending straight road, they ran past Edzell airfield to North Water Bridge.

Andy Freer and Andy Brown had struggled to keep warm as they waited patiently to start the final

eight mile stage to Montrose. At 10.18pm, in the darkness, they started the gentle climb up the road out of North Water Bridge, passing through pockets of mist which had formed with the falling temperature. Eventually at the top of a slight rise in the road the lights of Montrose appeared below. Descending through Hillside and along the main A937 road, they entered Montrose unnoticed - finishing in the railway station car park at 11.08pm.

The relay had been successfully completed in 24 hours 38 minutes, only slightly behind schedule. For the small group of runners assembled at the finish, thoughts of a celebration were short-lived because the local pubs were closed. There seemed little alternative but to return to the cars and a long tiring journey back to Glasgow.