



ANNUAL REPORT | 2023

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REPORT FROM THE BOARD - *A remarkable weekend*

So, let's reflect on 2023. It was a fabulous two days, and although the beautiful warm sunshine on the Saturday was replaced by grey skies and much cooler conditions on the Sunday, the enthusiasm of those taking part never diminished. Dundee's Jamie Crowe certainly brightened the occasion with his remarkable series of victories in the 5k (in a record time), 10k and 15 mile trail races. It's a winning treble never previously achieved. Then, Burghead's Sam Milton set a new record time when winning the Devil of Deeside Challenge in which he tackled the 5k, 10k, duathlon and 15 mile trail races. These are without doubt impressive individual performances, but Run Balmoral has never been solely about the top athletes. We celebrate the achievement of every finisher in every race. Everyone is a winner in our eyes.

All participants were rewarded with the third in our series of five medals to be presented up to 2025, each featuring an iconic landmark within and around the Balmoral estate. The 2019 medal showed Lochnagar, while last year we featured Balmoral Castle and this year it was Albert's Cairn. We know that many runners have set the target of completing their medal collections over the coming years so we will reveal the 2024 medal when entries for next year's event open.

We were extremely happy with the number of people taking part, which represented an increase on the 2022 figures. This is particularly satisfying at a time when many similar sized events across the UK, in the post-covid period, are experiencing significant falls in numbers. However, we know that work has to be done to continue to strengthen the appeal of Run Balmoral as we are still not back at the participation levels achieved in the pre-covid years.

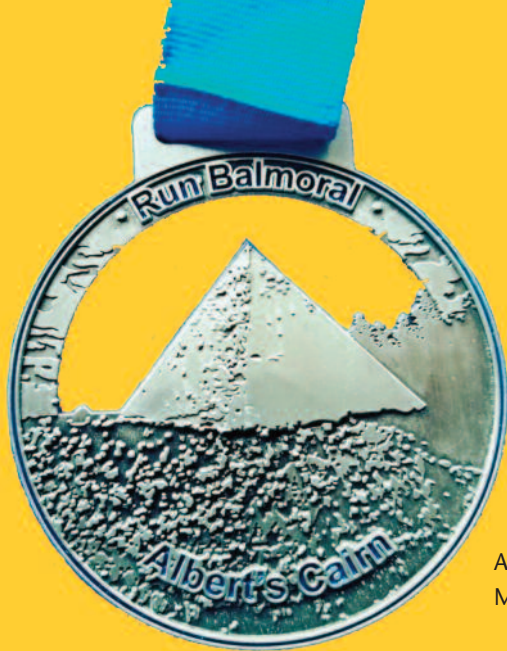
I doubt if I can recall Run Balmoral receiving as much positive feedback from competitors, their families, friends and visiting spectators, as we have this year. The event has always been popular and successful, but we have been humbled by the volume of supportive comments received in the immediate aftermath of the 2023 races. The vast growth in the use of social media has, of course, made it easier for people to interact with the event and to express their opinions, and we are extremely heartened by the support shown. It is a tribute to all those involved in putting the event on, including our own Management Team, the vast army of volunteers, suppliers and supporters, and, of course, our fantastic sponsors. However, we are by no means complacent, and are always open to considering constructive suggestions as to how we can improve. We will certainly be giving thought to how the 2024 event might be enhanced.

Our Sponsors

Run Balmoral could not happen without our sponsors, some of whom have been with us on a long-term basis. Stena Drilling and Harbour Energy remain our overall event sponsors and continue to support Run Balmoral on a significant scale. MPH, Apollo and Bristow are also key players who have shown a massive commitment to the event. Bristow delivered a new dimension to this year's activities by flying an aircraft onto the estate for the weekend. It proved to be a major attraction for young and old alike. We were also thrilled by the helicopter fly-past which set runners on their way at the start of the Stena Drilling 10k.

We welcomed NFU Mutual as the new sponsor of the secondary schools 2.5km. This is a race which has provided a platform for many future Scotland and Great Britain internationals to enjoy the experience of running in a major event for the first time. Local charity AberNecessities took title sponsorship of the Devil of Deeside Challenge thanks to generous sponsorship from NEO.





Albert's Cairn Medal

Albyn Hospital strengthened its association with Run Balmoral by once again sponsoring the popular Event Village. And this year we were able to engage local videography expert Stuart Ross Media to provide us with enhanced footage of the event, including drone coverage, courtesy of sponsors, Tidy Green Clean. Aberdeen-based Original 106FM came on board for the first time as media sponsors and this is a relationship we are keen to develop in future.

The support of Aberdeenshire Council, which has continued to back Run Balmoral since the event switched from being delivered by a commercial company to becoming a community event, in 2005, remains strong and is also hugely appreciated.

The contribution made by the team at Balmoral Estate, led by my fellow Director, Richard Gledson, is also immense, not only for making this wonderful venue available, but also for the dedicated work put in by staff to ensure everything goes so smoothly. Thanks are also extended to our colleagues at Run-4-It, our retail partner, who make a significant contribution to the success of the event.

Our charity programme continues to thrive and this year I am proud to say we worked closely with VSA, Kayleigh's Wee Stars, Aberdeen University Development Trust, Charlie House, and Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance. As usual, significant amounts of money will have been raised for each of these worthy causes.

I must also thank the Management Team - Jackie Stewart, Peter Jennings, Fraser Clyne, James Hamilton-Goddard and Jane Fedo - for once again delivering a fantastic event. I should also praise our commentator, Graham Anderson, who kept everyone expertly informed and entertained over the two days.

There are many other volunteer groups, organisations and service suppliers who contribute to the success of RunBalmoral and we have mentioned them elsewhere in this document. To each and every one, I wish to express my sincere thanks.

Bert McIntosh, sponsor of Primary Schools Race, took part in the 5K



It is, in every respect, a truly fantastic example of all sectors of the community coming together in partnership to create and enjoy what is a superb family occasion.

Planning is already underway for RunBalmoral 2024 - our 25th year - which will take place over the weekend of 27th-28th April. I hope you will join us then.

James Knowles, Chair, Balmoral Road Races Ltd, May 2023.

RunBalmoral - Roll of Honour 2023

(Gun times except for Corporate Challenge and Devil O'Deeside results which are based on chip times)

MPH Primary Schools 1.5km

Boys

	min:sec
1 Patrick Kennedy (Banchory SAC/Banchory)	5:46
2 Cullen Bowie (Young Meldrum Runners)	5:59
3 Joe Murray (Young Meldrum Runners)	6:04

NFU Mutual 2.5km

Boys

	min:sec
1 Alex Henthorn (Aberdeen AAC/Harlaw Ac)	7:43
2 Struan McKay (Aberdeen AAC/Hazlehead)	7:59
3 Gregor Adamson (Gala Harriers/St Mary's)	8:01

Harbour Energy 5km

Men

	min:sec
1 Jamie Crowe (Central AC)	14:20
2 Lachlan Oates (Shettleston Harriers)	14:45
3 Michael Ferguson (Aberdeen AAC)	15:03

Stena Drilling Tartan 10km

Men

	min:sec
1 Jamie Crowe (Central AC)	31:54
2 Myles Edwards (Aberdeen AAC)	32:52
3 Aaron Odentz (Aberdeen AAC)	33:44

Apollo Duathlon

Men

	hr:min:sec
1 Ian Russell (Fleet Feet)	1:19:10
2 Sam Milton (Moray Road Runners)	1:20:08
3 Dan Whitehead (Ballater)	1:23:09

Bristow 15 Mile Trail Race

Men

	hr:min:sec
1 Jamie Crowe (Central AC)	1:22:26
2 Kyle Greig (Metro Aberdeen)	1:25:27
3 Sam Milton (Moray Road Runners)	1:34:29

Bristow 3 Mile Trail Race

Men

	min:sec
1 Harry Jackson (Aberdeen AAC)	19:37
2 Mark Young (Metro Aberdeen)	20:27
3 Nicolas Chanes (Metairie, Louisiana)	21:25

AberNecessities Devil of Deeside Challenge

Men

	hr:min:sec
1 Sam Milton (Moray Road Runners)	3:47:47
2 Stephen Molloy (Apollo/Grammar RC)	4:01:34
3 Paul Corbett (Inverness)	4:26:52

Corporate Challenge

	hr:min:sec
1 Harbour Harriers	3:54:00
2 TAQA	4:20:02
3 Stena Drilling	4:32:41

MPH Primary Schools 1.5km

Girls

	min:sec
1 Eilidh Murdoch (Braemar School)	6:00
2 Zoe Bichan (Drumoak School)	6:30
3 Rachel Fitzpatrick (Hazlehead School)	6:46

NFU Mutual 2.5km

Girls

	min:sec
1 Jessica Needs (Aberdeen AAC/Peterhead Acad)	8:19
2 Emily Christie (Falkirk VH/St Mungo's HS)	8:29
3 Rhian Birnie (Aberdeen AAC/Inverurie Acad)	8:57

Harbour Energy 5km

Women

	min:sec
1 Constance Nankivell (East Sutherland)	17:11
2 Gemma Cormack (Moray Road Runners)	17:57
3 Jenny Bannerman (Inverness Harriers)	18:11

Stena Drilling Tartan 10km

Women

	min:sec
1 Nicola MacDonald (Metro Aberdeen)	38:41
2 Chloe Gray (Metro Aberdeen)	40:20
3 Moira Davie (Forres Harriers)	43:22

Apollo Duathlon

Women

	hr:min:sec
1 Jenny Stanning (Metro Aberdeen)	1:36:58
2 Suzanne Matonti (Torphins)	1:43:39
3 Estera Zak (Fleet Feet)	1:45:45

Bristow 15 Mile Trail Race

Women

	hr:min:sec
1 Meryl Cooper (Deeside Runners)	1:45:29
2 Harriet Cross (Metro Aberdeen)	1:47:27
3 Mhairi McAllister (Morning Madness)	1:48:28

Bristow 3 Mile Trail Race

Women

	min:sec
1 Caris Strachan (Newburgh Dunes)	23:11
2 Anna Jackson (Aberdeen AAC)	23:46
3 Mary Nower (Banchory)	24:34

AberNecessities Devil of Deeside Challenge

Women

	hr:min:sec
1 Estera Zak (Fleet Feet)	4:52:05
2 Lynne Parkinson (Aberdeen)	5:13:09
3 Jacoline Dey (Insch Trail Running Club)	5:30:15

Course Records

Based on gun times (other than Devil of Deeside which is based on chip times)

Two new records were set this year. Jamie Crowe achieved a new men's mark in the Harbour Energy 5k before going on to win the Stena Drilling 10k and the Bristow 15 mile rail race. His 5k gun time was 14:20 and his chip time was 14:19. It's the first time an athlete has won these three races on the same weekend. And Sam Milton (Moray Road Runners) set a new standard when winning the AberNecessities Devil of Deeside Challenge for the second year in a row.

Event	Name	Year	Time
1.5km boys	Stewart Millar (<i>Cluny</i>)	2011	5min 21sec
1.5km girls	Rebecca Eggeling (<i>Aberdeen AAC</i>)	2012	5min 54sec
	Emily Christie (<i>Falkirk Vic Harriers</i>)	2022	5min 54sec
2.5km boys	Liam Barnsby (<i>East Sutherland</i>)	2013	6min 58sec
2.5km girls	Rebecca Eggeling (<i>Aberdeen AAC</i>)	2016	7min 52sec
5km men	Jamie Crowe (<i>Central AC</i>)	2023	14min 24sec
5km women	Rhona Auckland (<i>Banchory Stonehaven AC</i>)	2014	15min 55sec
10km men	Robbie Simpson (<i>Deeside Runners</i>)	2014	31min 17sec
10km women	Ginie Barrand (<i>Metro Aberdeen</i>)	2022	36min 07sec
Duathlon men	Rob Brookes (<i>Cosmic</i>)	2018	1hr 18min 25sec
Duathlon women	Clare Whitehead (<i>Deeside</i>)	2018	1hr 33min 03sec
15 mile Trail race men	Andrew Douglas (<i>Inverclyde</i>)	2015	1hr 18min30sec
15 mile Trail race women	Angela Mudge (<i>Carnethy</i>)	2013	1hr 37min 31sec
3 mile Trail race men	Angus Wood	2019	19min23sec
3 mile Trail race women	Anisha Badial (<i>Aberdeen AAC</i>)	2016	20min 48sec
Devil of Deeside men	Sam Milton (<i>Moray Road Runners</i>)	2023	3hr 47min 47secs
Devil of Deeside women	Kerry Prise	2017	4hr 37min 08sec



Jamie Crowe



Sam Milton

Tidy Green Clean Videography by Stuart Ross Media

For the second year in a row we are pleased to have been able to enhance coverage of Run Balmoral by providing top class videography footage of the event, including the use of a drone, courtesy of our sponsor TGC (Tidy Green Clean). Stuart Ross of Stuart Ross Media was contracted on this occasion and, being an accomplished ultra distance runner with a good knowledge of the estate, he was able to do a fantastic job.

TGC's support has allowed us to obtain some magnificent images of the Balmoral estate over the weekend and these have been edited into two high quality videos which will be of great interest to this year's competitors and it will also be used to promote the 2024 event.



Aberdeenshire Active Schools Awards 2023

To encourage participation in the Balmoral races, Aberdeenshire Active Schools present trophies to the schools achieving the biggest number of entrants. There are three categories of prizes and this year Aboyne Academy won the trophy in the secondary schools competition. This brought an end to Banchory Academy's seven year winning record. Banchory Primary won the 'large' (i.e. roll of 100 or more) primary schools award, for the eighth time, while Tarland took the title for 'small' schools for the fourth year in a row. The trophies were presented by Rachel Boal of Aberdeenshire Council.

	Secondary Schools	Large Primary Schools	Small Primary Schools
2014	Banchory Academy	Banchory	Crathes
2015	Banchory Academy	Banchory	Finzean
2016	Banchory Academy	Banchory	Finzean
2017	Banchory Academy	Banchory	Finzean
2018	Banchory Academy	Banchory	Tarland
2019	Banchory Academy	Banchory	Tarland
2022	Banchory Academy	Banchory	Tarland
2023	Aboyne Academy	Banchory	Tarland

T Shirt Design Competition

Eviee Jennings-Park and Aria Dyson were the winners of the 2023 Run Balmoral schools t-shirt design competition. The standard of entries was very high but Eviee and Aria came out on top with their impressive drawings. Eviee's artwork appeared on the MPH 1.5k primary schools race t-shirt while Aria's appeared on the NFU Mutual 2.5k secondary schools top.

In addition to their individual prizes, the youngsters earned £100 to donate to either their school, sports club or a charity of their choice.

Eviee, a pupil at Aberdeen's Hazlehead Primary, opted to donate her prize to the Archie Foundation. Aria, who attends Blairgowrie High, donated her prize to the school's Art Department. We are grateful to all the schools and pupils who took part in the competition and would like to thank teachers and parents for encouraging so many youngsters to get involved.



Above: Banchory Primary Trophy
Below: Tarland Primary Trophy



Aboyne Academy Trophy



MPH Primary Schools 1.5km

Enjoyment. Excitement. Enthusiasm. Never mind the 3Rs: the 3Es were once again on show in abundance during the MPH 1.5 boys' and girls' races this year. And when Co-Race Director Jackie Stewart sounded the hooter to set the youngsters on their way, he unleashed a tidal wave of a fourth E: Energy. Hundreds of children sprinted off at a pace Usain Bolt would be proud of, then some slowed down quicker than others once they realised that 1.5k is, actually, quite a long way to run on. But what a great setting they were able to enjoy as they set off along the smooth and flat pathways taking them past the castle, cheered on under wonderful blue skies by thousands of spectators.

Who knows what stars of the future may have been taking part this year?

Run Balmoral provides a wonderful opportunity to run in front of a big and enthusiastic crowd of family and friends in a spectacular setting. It's often the springboard to a lifelong love for running and sport in general. And when looking back through the results we can see many names which now appear in our adult races. Some budding stars of the future potentially take their first competitive steps at Run Balmoral. While it's fantastic to see the fast runners doing well, the most important thing is that everyone taking part enjoys the occasion and is inspired to run in other events in the future.

Patrick Kennedy, a pupil at Banchory school, led the way in the boys' race, clocking 5:46 to finish 13secs ahead of Cullen Bowie (Old Rayne School) while Joe Murray (Strathburn School) was a further five secs behind in third position. Braemar's Eilidh Murdoch topped the podium in the girls' run, recording 6:00. It's an impressive time, bettered by only one runner in the boys' race. Zoe Bichen (Drumoak School) was second in 6:30 with Rachel Fitzpatrick (Hazlehead School) third in 6:46.





MPH Primary Schools 1.5km

Top three boys -

Cullen Bowie,
Patrick Kennedy and
Joe Murray - with
Bert McIntosh
of sponsors MPH



Top three girls (LtR) -

Zoe Bichen, Eiidh Murdoch
and Rachel Fitzpatrick





NFU Mutual
INSURANCE | PENSIONS | INVESTMENTS

NFU Mutual Secondary Schools 2.5km

Top current Scotland international runner Eilish McColgan is among the many famous names who have taken part in the schools races at Balmoral in the past. Eilish's mum Liz finished second behind Paula Radcliffe's world record-breaking five mile run here in 1998. She also won the 10k (on a different course to the current one) in 2003. It was around this time that Eilish took part in the schools race – and she didn't win. So, for those who aren't among the winners at this age – do not give up. You may develop into a faster runner in the future.

This year, Alex Henthorn (Harlaw Academy) showed his potential with a fine run, outpacing his rivals to win. The Aberdeen AAC runner stopped the clock at 7min 43secs to finish 16 secs clear of his clubmate Struan McKay (Hazlehead Academy) who outsprinted Gala Harriers' Gregor Adamson (St Mary's Melrose) by two secs to take second spot.

There was more success for Aberdeen AAC when Jessica Needs, a student at Peterhead Academy, won the girls' race in 8:19. She had finished second in 2022. Emily Christie (St Mungo's High), from Falkirk Victoria Harriers, who equalled the course record when winning the primary schools race in 2022, stepped up a level and did admirably to finish second in 8:29. Rhian Birnie (Inverurie Academy), who represents Metro Aberdeen Running Club, was third for the second year in a row, in 8:57. The 2022 champion Hope Thomson (Banchory Academy) was fourth in 9:04.





NFU Mutual
INSURANCE | PENSIONS | INVESTMENTS

NFU Mutual Secondary Schools 2.5km





NFU Mutual Secondary Schools 2.5km

Boys prize winners.

*LtR Struan McKay, Alex
Henthorn, Gregor
Adamson*



Girls prize winners.

*LtR Emily Christie, Jessica
Needs, Rhian Birnie*



Above: Constance Nankivell - women's race winner

Below: Jamie Crowe sets a new record



Great Britain international Jamie Crowe flew into the Run Balmoral record books by becoming the first man to win the Harbour Energy 5k, the Stena Drilling 10k and the Bristow 15 mile trail race – all within a little over 24 hours.

Crowe's stunning series of performances kicked off with an excellent victory in the 5k. The 27 year-old Dundee-based athlete, who represents Central AC, demonstrated a razor sharp turn of speed to smash the course record, clocking 14min 20secs to slash four secs off the previous mark set by Sean Chalmers (Inverness Harriers) 12 months earlier. And this was done despite losing his lead after going off-course at one point.

Elgin-based Lachlan Oates (Shettleston Harriers) finished in the silver medal position for the second year in a row when clocking 14:45, and former Scottish 1500m track champion Michael Ferguson (Aberdeen AAC), competing at Balmoral for the first time, took third spot in 15:03. Neither could live with Crowe's pace.

Then, with little more than 60 minutes of recovery, Crowe was back on the starting line, this time for the Stena Drilling 10k which follows a route widely acknowledged as being one of the toughest in the country. This time he shrugged off his opponents with a performance that was oozing with power and strength, to produce another clearcut victory in 31:54. But he wasn't finished. After a good overnight rest, Crowe returned for the Bristow 15 mile trail race, cruising to a relaxed victory in 1hr 22min 26sec. No-one has previously won this incredible treble at the Balmoral meeting which is now in its 24th year.

Crowe said: "I'm preparing for next month's Great Britain team trial for the world mountain running championships so I just want to do as many races as possible to find out about my fitness. I came up to Ballater for the weekend and decided to make the most of it. I was surprised to get the 5k record as I went a wee bit off course. I went straight on at the point where we were meant to turn. Fortunately, Michael Ferguson called me back so I only lost five or six seconds."

Constance Nankivell celebrated her 23rd birthday by winning the women's division of the race in a personal best time of 17:11. The Edinburgh University student, who comes from Strathpeffer, was competing in the Deeside event for the first time since finishing third in 2015. She said: "It's a long time since I've been here but I took part every year when I was at school, from about age 10 to 15. This is the first chance I've had to come back since going to university. It's a great way to start my birthday and I'm very happy with my time. It's my first race for a while as I picked up a hip injury in February, so it's good to put in a decent performance. I'm now looking forward to next month's Scottish 5k and 10k road championships."



Harbour Energy 5km

*Race winner
Jamie Crowe (2279),
third placed
Michael Ferguson (1739),
runner-up
Lachlan Oates (2308)*



Top three women -

*Constance Nankivell (1990),
Gemma Cormack (1653),
Jenny Bannerman (1530)*



Team Harbour Energy



Stena Drilling 10K

Jamie Crowe stepped onto the starting line of the 10k little over an hour after his record-breaking performance in the 5k. But any hopes his rivals had that the Great Britain international might be vulnerable, were quickly squashed as he soon stamped his authority on the contest. Crowe went on to win in style, zipping up and over the notorious Balmoral hill and past the Ballater Pipe Band before going on to record 31min 54sec to finish well clear of Aberdeen AAC's Myles Edwards (32:54) and Aaron Odentz (33:44).

Crowe said: "I used the first couple of kilometres to test how my legs were feeling, but then pushed on a bit. Then I realised I had a chance of the record, so I pushed on again, but there was a strong headwind on the way back and that slowed me. I had heard about the hill, but didn't realise just how much of a hill it is! But I'm training for mountain running at the moment, so it probably did me good. It's a nice course with most of it off-road, which is good."

Former Scottish 1500m track champion, Myles Edwards (Aberdeen AAC), was competing at Balmoral for the first time since 2011. He had previously won the 5k, in 2007 and 2010, and finished second in 2009 and 2011. Third-place finisher Odentz has also been a regular at Balmoral over the years: he placed second in the 2015 secondary schools race.

Nicola MacDonald (Metro Aberdeen) won the top women's prize, recording 38:41 to finish comfortably ahead of clubmate Chloe Gray (40:20) and Moira Davie (Forres Harriers, 43:22). The late withdrawal of the 2022 champion and course record holder Ginie Barrand, opened the door for MacDonald to step up one place from last year. Her winning time was 16secs quicker than she recorded in 2022. She said: "It's a bit of a bitter sweet feeling as I'd have liked Ginie to be here, but I hope she gets over her injury quickly. I really enjoy this race as there's no pressure on chasing a fast time, it's just all about putting in the effort."

Third-placed Davie, who was fourth in 2022 and has twice been a winner of the 15 mile trail race (2015 and 2016), won the prize as first kilter in the women's race for the second year in a row. David Scott, who brought a huge contingent of runners from the Fit Like Joggers club to Balmoral, was the first kilted man in the race. His time was 49:53 (gun), 48:54 (chip).



Nicola MacDonald wins the women's race



Above: Jamie Crowe on his way to another record.

Below: Kilter champions Moira Davie and David Scott.







Stena Drilling Tartan 10k

Top three men

*LtR Myles Edwards,
Jamie Crowe,
Aaron Odentz*



*Pipers at the top
of the hill*

Stena Drilling-Harbour Energy Corporate Team Challenge

Harbour Harriers retained this prestigious title, making it two years in a row under the current name. However, better known previously as Cops and Joggers, they have five other victories to their credit. So, the magnificent trophy, made from red deer antler and sycamore wood, will remain in the possession of the squad whose company is one of Run Balmoral's key sponsors. TAQA held off another of our main sponsors, Stena Drilling, to take second position. It was also great to see three of our official charities placing teams in the top ten. Congratulations to Voluntary Service Aberdeen, Kayleigh's Wee Stars and University of Aberdeen Development Trust. And a team from our Event Village sponsor, Albyn Hospital, finished eighth.

Each team had to field four runners in the Harbour Energy 5km and four runners in the Stena Drilling Tartan 10K. The same runners were able to compete in both the 5km and the 10km if they so wished or it was open to field a fresh line-up in each race.

CORPORATE TEAM CHALLENGE - WINNERS - FIRST HELD 2013

2013	Aberdeen Sports Village
2014	Cops and Joggers
2015	Cops and Joggers
2016	Aberdeen Sports Village
2017	Cops and Joggers
2018	Cops and Joggers
2019	Cops and Joggers
2022	Harbour Harriers
2023	Harbour Harriers

FULL RESULTS:-

	HR:MIN:SEC
1 Harbour Harriers	03:54:00
2 TAQA	04:20:02
3 Stena Drilling	04:32:41
4 Harbour Energy	04:41:50
5 Pun Runners	04:46:12
6 NEO	05:10:50
7 Voluntary Service Aberdeen	05:13:58
8 Albyn Hospital	05:18:00
9 Kayleigh's Wee Stars	05:31:22
10 University of Aberdeen Development Trust	05:34:05

Members of the winning Harbour Energy team are pictured here with the trophy: (Left to right) Ross Aird, Daniel Christie, Andrew Miles, Russell Willox and Ali Swan



Stepping onto the Run Balmoral podium isn't an unusual experience for this year's Apollo duathlon men's champion, Ian Russell. The Aberdeen competitor was third in 2016 and second in 2022, before returning to top spot this year following an enthralling battle with Moray's Sam Milton.

Milton had beaten Russell for the title in 2022, when the duo also finished first and second respectively in the Devil of Deeside Challenge. On this occasion Russell decided to forego tackling the Devil, preferring to tackle the duathlon on fresh legs. His old rival, Milton, didn't have such a luxury as he pursued the defence of his Devil crown.

But it still turned into an intriguing contest as Russell described: "At the end of the first run I was lying just behind Sam in second position, but we came out of transition almost together. The mountain bike stage is my strong point so I concentrated on trying to put as much distance between us as I could before the second run. Sam caught me on the second run in 2022 but I was determined not to let that happen again, and fortunately that's how it worked out."

Russell's combined time of 1 hr 19min 10secs for the 6k run/16k bike/5k run brought him home 58secs ahead of Milton while the 2016 champion, Ballater's Dan Whitehead, was third in 1:23:09.

Russell added: "It's a great event and it suits my strengths. The mountain bike trails are brilliant and the runs offer a good challenge. It's certainly a decent test and hopefully I'll be back to try it again."

The broad smile on the face of Jenny Stanning told the whole story, the Metro Aberdeen club member being unable to hide her emotions after winning the women's division of the duathlon. Stanning had placed second behind Lumphanan's Laura Murray in 2022 before going on to take third position in the Devil of Deeside Challenge.

But she wasn't to be denied her first title this year as she blasted round the course in 1:36:58 to finish well clear of Suzanne Matonti (Torphins), 1:43:39, and Estera Zak (Fleet Feet), 1:45:45. Stanning said: "I am so pleased. I did the Devil last year but the duathlon was my favourite part of it. So, I was absolutely clear that if I came back, it would be to do only the duathlon. And I loved it, it's an absolutely brilliant event."

"There's just so many good people here, you get loads of encouragement and the course is really beautiful. Although it was overcast, it gave it a very atmospheric feel up on the hill. This is definitely my favourite event. I guess I'll have to defend my title next year."



Jenny Stanning - women's champion



Above: Race winner Ian Russell approaches transition





Apollo Duathlon



Top three men LtR

*Sam Milton (second),
Ian Russell (first),
Dan Whitehead (third)
with Apollo's
Marissa Stephen (who
finished second in the
over-40 women's race*



Top three women LtR

*Suzanne Matonti,
Jenny Stanning,
Ester Zak*

Jamie Crowe could have been excused for feeling slightly leg weary in the Bristow 15 mile trail race after setting a record time in the Harbour Energy 5k and speeding to victory in the Stena Drilling 10k 24 hours earlier. But if he was feeling the strain, there was no visible evidence of it, as the Dundee athlete eased his way to yet another victory, completing an unprecedented hat-trick of successes at Run Balmoral.

Crowe's time of 1hr 22min 26secs gave him a comfortable margin of victory over Metro Aberdeen's Kyle Greig, 1:25:27, who has now finished runner-up in this race on three occasions. Moray's Sam Milton took third position in 1:34:29 which was enough to earn him the AberNecessities Devil of Deeside title for the second year in a row.



Crowe said: "It has certainly been a successful weekend and I've really enjoyed it. The grounds of the estate are amazing and the 15 mile course was spectacular. It's a stunning route and there's a surprisingly tough hill near the end. It was definitely a sting in the tail."

Having won three of the four races which make up the Devil of Deeside Challenge, was there any possibility that Crowe might be tempted to go for the grand slam by tackling the duathlon in a future year? Without hesitation, he replied: "No chance."

Great Britain ultra trail running international Meryl Cooper ran a perfectly paced race, coming through in the closing stages to

claim the women's title on her first visit to Run Balmoral. The Banchory-based athlete, who represents Deeside Runners, is used to competing over significantly longer races held over extremely rough or technical terrain, so the Bristow run was a new experience.

However, she was totally unfazed, finishing with a broad smile after completing the route in 1:45:29. Harriet Cross (Metro Aberdeen) took second position in 1:47:27 with Glasgow's Mhairi McAllister (Morning Madness) third in 1:48:28.

Cooper said: "It's so good to get a local race and I absolutely loved running on faster trails to those I'm more used to tackling. I loved it. There's lots of variety with faster stretches to begin with before hitting some more technical sections - which suit me better - towards the end.

"I don't think I took the lead until the final three or four miles. I was back in third position until then as there were a lot of strong runners out there. I wasn't sure if I'd catch them but I noticed they were walking on some of the hills and that gave me confidence that I could go on and take it. I felt I paced it well and it was great fun."



Bristow 15 mile Trail Race

*Jamie Crowe cruises to
his third win of the
weekend*



*Women's winner Meryl
Cooper receives her prize
from Matt Rhodes. Others
are Harriet Cross (second)
and Mhairi McAllister (third)*



Bristow Bristow 3 mile Trail Race

Sixteen-year-old Aberdeen AAC runner Harry Jackson stormed clear of the field to win the Bristow 3 mile trail race by completing the testing circuit in 19min 38sec. It's the second year in a row that the title has gone to a Methlick teenager, Finn Hilton winning in 2022. Metro Aberdeen's Mark Young was runner-up in 20:28 while Nicolas Chanes finished third in 21:26. Chanes, who comes from Metairie, Louisiana, took an early lead but was unable to sustain it on the hilly course.

Caris Strachan (Newburgh Dunes) retained the women's crown in 23:11, a 39secs improvement on her 2022 time. This was an impressive performance given she had taken part in the 5k (20:52) and 10k (46:33) the previous day. Harry Jackson's older sister Anna was second in 23:47 with Banchory's Mary Nower third in 24:35. Nower had also competed in the previous day's 5k and 10k.



Above: Women's race winner Caris Strachan receives her award from Matt Rhodes

Below: Race winner Harry Jackson receives his award from Matt Rhodes



Smiling all the way



Caris Strachan celebrates her victory



Sam Milton (Moray Road Runners) admitted that a borrowed mountain bike, with an impeccable record, helped him to retain his title in the AberNecessities Devil of Deeside Challenge. The Moray Road Runners club member, from Burghead, clocked an awesome combined time of 3hr 47min 47secs for the four races, to break the previous Devil record of 3:48:58 set by three-times champion Alan Semple in 2019.

Between them, Semple and Milton have now won the Devil of Deeside Challenge on all five occasions since the competition was launched in 2017 – and the same bike has been used in every race. Milton explained: “The irony is that it’s Alan’s bike I’ve used for the past two years, so I would have been letting the bike down if I hadn’t won. It’s unbeaten. Seriously I’m very happy to win again. It’s a great weekend of racing and over the two days, I’m pleased with my performances. My endurance came to the fore and I finished feeling strong. I certainly felt much better in the 15 mile trail race than I did last year, so maybe I’ve learned to pace myself better.”

Milton was without doubt impressive throughout the contest. He was 11th in the Harbour Energy 5k (16min 35secs) and fourth in the Stena Drilling 10k (36:34) on Saturday. He followed that with a runner-up placing in Sunday’s Apollo duathlon (1:20:09) before finishing off by taking third position in the Bristow 15 mile trail race (1:34:29).

Stephen Molloy (Apollo/Aberdeen Grammar RC) took second position with a combined time of 4:01:34 with Paul Corbett (Inverness) third in 4:26:52.

Estera Zak’s love affair with Run Balmoral reached a new level when the Aberdeen-based athlete scooped the Devil of Deeside women’s title. Zak finished in second position last year but climbed onto top spot on the podium on this occasion with a series of solid performances.

Below: Devils ready for battle





A happy Devil has earned his medal

The Polish athlete, who has lived in the north east for the past 16 years, was bursting with enthusiasm at the end. She said: "It's such an amazing event, I absolutely love it. This is the fourth time I've competed here. Apart from 2022, when I was second in the Devil, I have twice run the 15 mile race. I was really pleased with my run in the trail race this year. It's such a beautiful course, I love it. When you are trying for a fast time you sometimes don't appreciate the scenery. In the past I have taken it all in, but this time I was concentrating on racing. But occasionally I could look around and it was beautiful. I will return next year, but maybe not to do the Devil. But we'll see."

Lynne Parkinson (Aberdeen) was runner-up in 5:13:09 and Jacqueline Dey (Insch Trail Running Club) took third spot in 5:30:15

Thank goodness I'm finished



Devil on a bike



AberNecessities
Devil of Deeside
Challenge



*Sam Milton recives his
trophy from
Danielle Fletcher-Horn
of AberNecessities*



*Estera Zak recives her
trophy from
Danielle Fletcher-Horn
of AberNecessities*



Albyn Hospital Event Village

The Event Village plays an important and popular role in offering a wide range of facilities and activities for visitors to the estate over the race weekend, primarily on the Saturday. Affiliated charities were, as usual, given space alongside the caterers, Country Flavours of Alford, and other exhibitors including the Event Village sponsors, Albyn Hospital. Our retail partner, Run-4-It, was also present. Among the features enjoyed by youngsters were the climbing wall, body zorbs and the exciting bike track and obstacle course. The miniature railway

was again popular. Ballater soft play attended for the first time, offering activities for younger children.

Corporate Hospitality

Corporate hospitality is provided at the event by Country Flavours of Alford and is available for any company or organisation which requests this service. A high quality and varied selection of snacks and drinks are made available throughout the weekend.



Charities

Our charity programme continues to thrive and this year we have been working closely with five organisations.

GOLD Nominated Charity

- **VSA:**
www.vsa.org.uk

SILVER Nominated Charities

- **Charlie House:**
www.charliehouse.org.uk
- **Kayleigh's Wee Stars**
www.kayleighsweestars.co.uk
- **University of Aberdeen Development Trust:**
www.abdn.ac.uk
- **Scotland's Charity Air Ambulance:**
www.scaa.org.uk



Sponsors, Partners, Event Supporters and Suppliers

RunBalmoral could not take place without our sponsors, partner organisations, service providers and volunteers. Hundreds of people contribute in a variety of ways to making the event a success and we are indebted to them all.

Main Sponsors and Partners

Stena Drilling, Harbour Energy, Apollo, Bristow, NFU Mutual, MPH Ltd, AberNecessities (with support from NEO), Aberdeenshire Council, Balmoral Estate, Tidy Green Clean, Albyn Hospital, Run-4-It, Original 106FM.

Scouts, 1st Inch Scouts, Blair Gibb Complementary Therapy, Braemar Miniature Railway, Braemar Mountain Rescue, COTAG 4x4 Response, Crathie School, Deans of Huntly Ltd, Dr Ewen Mcleod, Friskis & Svettis, Grampian Fire and Rescue Service, Iain Mackenzie, Local Stewards, Police Scotland and Police Scotland Cadets, Ronnie Finnie, Royal Lochnagar Distillery, Ruth Mackenzie, Scottishathletics, Specialist Cars Nissan, Scott Fraser.

Suppliers

Aberdeen 4 x 4 rentals, Appin Sports, Astute, AV One Solutions

(PA System),

Bike Station Ballater, Blackford Group Limited (Insurance), Country Flavours of Alford, Deveron Loos, DM Forklifts, Event First Aid Services, Esslemont Marquees, Front Runner, Gareth Guy, Genny Hire,



Graham Anderson, Grampian Event Security (Jim Wilkin), Grant Considine, Greens of Haddington (Andrew Green), GWT Plant hire, Herd Hire, Kevin McGarry, Krono:Sports, Leisurelend (Aberdeenshire

Council), Invercauld Estate, Itab, J Ross IT Ltd, Ian Milne Freelance Design, Lizzie Scripps (Pop-Up Soft Play Ballater), Scottish Communications, Sun Belt Rentals, Marathon-photos.com, Run ABC, Scottish Ambulance Service, Telehandler Hire,

Trophies International, Wallace Practice (Physios).



Event Volunteers and Supporters

Aboyne Academy, Aboyne & Upper Deeside Rotary Club, Active Aberdeenshire, Aberdeenshire Leaders, Air Training Corps (NE Scotland Wing), Ballater and District Pipe Band, 1st Braemar

Participation Stats

NUMBER OF FINISHERS PER RACE 2005-2023

	10K	5K	15 Mile Trail	Duathlon	3 Mile Trail	2.5K	1.5K B	1.5K G	Mile	Other	Total
2023	1413	778	485	146	50	125	318	278			3593
2022	1438	622	449	170	35	131	303	249			3397
2019	1757	778	482	197	37	143	408	342			4154
2018	1906	790	497	230	44	202	422	376			4467
2017	1721	738	439	191	60	169	434	371			4123
2016	1735	633	437	158	35	219	426	381			4022
2015	1823	714	429	143	37	237	449	401			4233
2014	1825	692	327		55	212	414	392			3917
2013	1855	766	297			228	452	374			3972
2012	1915	641	218			215	375	324	184		3872
2011	1940	732	148			184	375	308			3687
2010	1889	819				214	354	278			3554
2009	1999	614				191	524 *				3328
2008	1884	514				185	477 *				3060
2007	1533	227				165	384 *				2309
2006	1347	76				172	347 *				1942
2005	1384									568 +	1952

Notes: * Combined boys and girls races + Junior race mixed ages

RUN BALMORAL 2023 ENTRY AND PARTICIPATION NUMBERS

	2022			2023		
	Number Entered	Number Participated	%Age	Number Entered	Number Participated	%Age
MPH Primary Schools 1.5km Boys	360	303	84	362	318	88
MPH Primary Schools 1.5km Girls	284	249	88	336	278	83
NFU Secondary Schools 2.5k	205	131	64	178	125	70
Harbour Energy 5km	924	622	67	959	778	81
Stena Drilling 10km	2127	1438	68	1721	1413	82
Apollo Duathlon	282	170	60	189	146	77
Bristow 15 Mile Trail race	715	449	63	631	485	77
Bristow 3 Mile Race	66	35	53	63	50	79
Total	4963	3397	68	4439	3593	81
AberNecessities Devil of Deeside	128	77	60	94	67	81

Note: Individual race numbers include Devil entrants

RUN BALMORAL 2023 PERCENTAGE OF ENTRANTS WHO PARTICIPATED

	2017	2018	2019	2022	2023
MPH Primary Schools 1.5km Boys	85	91	91	84	88
MPH Primary Schools 1.5km Girls	85	92	87	88	83
NFU Secondary Schools 2.5k	68	77	82	64	70
Harbour Energy 5km	77	81	78	67	81
Stena Drilling 10km	77	78	79	68	82
Apollo Duathlon	75	80	78	60	77
Bristow 15 Mile Trail race	72	76	76	63	77
Bristow 3 Mile Race	74	73	82	53	79
Total	77	80	80	68	81
AberNecessities Devil of Deeside	69	77	73	60	81

Note: Individual race numbers include Devil entrants





Balmoral Road Races Ltd

Board of Directors: James Knowles (*Chair*) | Richard Gledson
RunBalmoral Management Team: Jackie Stewart | Peter Jennings | Fraser Clyne
James Hamilton-Goddard | Jane Fedo

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