Drinnahilly closes the 2017 Hill & Dale Series

"Thursday nights won't be the same until next April again" and "there'll be a big gap in my Thursday nights now that will be hard to fill" – just two comments after the latest Hill & Dale Series came to a conclusion on Friday (yes Friday) evening. There are indeed two 'non-Thursday' races in the Series, the first the Classic Slieve Donard Race coming in the middle of the series that takes place on a Saturday afternoon and then this one, after which O'Hare's Lounge hosts a memorable Series Prize Giving and the hordes imbibe copiously in the knowledge that they'll probably have an extra hour or two in bed in the morning.

There are two ways to run a successful project – the first requires serious planning, work out the minimum resources required to get the job done (= efficiency & effectiveness) while the second requires serious planning (ensuring every activity no matter how small is resourced, not forgetting the risk management plan) and then throw as much resource at it as possible – this is the post-war Communist model or 1970s Enterprise Ulster model (= craic & effectiveness).

Why the craic? Well that's because there are so many people with little individually to do, so there's time to 'brew up a cuppa' and reflect on 'great times past' and with so many workers, the job still gets done. Damien Brannigan has been Drinnahilly's Race Director since Victorian times and his detailed organisation plan can be found on microfiche at PRONI (the Public Records Office) in the Titanic Quarter in Belfast as a testament as to 'how to get the job done'. However, no matter how good the plan there is always scope for the unexpected…

By 6:15pm, with over an hour to go to race time, the major function suite in O'Hare's Lounge was buzzing – with workers – dozens of them – and dozens more outside armed with fluorescent marshal jackets. Inside, the registration team was clearly oestrogen-dominant and maybe surprisingly all smiles. Behind them was a mobile 'Wadsworth's Emporium' where runners as they arrived, who qualified having done 6 races, were directed towards Messrs McCann & Horrox for a 'gilet fitting' session. Adorned with the 2017 Hill & Dale logo these gilets are the latest 'must-have' running fashion accessory and whereas back in the 80s would have been frowned upon by the 'hardy fell runner' for the 21st Century 'hardy mountain runner' their smiling faces lit up the room.

Meanwhile the Race Director was also a picture of great content. He surveyed the well-oiled machine that he had set in motion after months of planning, tried and tested over the decades and was so pleased with what he saw that he declared that he 'might even run the race' himself. Having reached his half-century this year and not having raced for many moons, this would really be a turn-up for the books.

At 7:23pm, starting earlier than normal, the Gettysburg Address, sorry the pre-race instructions boomed across the grass of Donard Demesne and the midges flew for momentary cover as Brannigan described in the finest detail the course route and thanked all in sundry. As the perennial Frank Morgan blew the starting whistle a Drinnahilly record of 216 runners set off across the park. Sorry, it was only 215, for Brannigan remained undecided – in a moment of rare decisiveness he said to all around 'I'll go' – off came the top and off he set… Just over 26 minutes later and in an official time of 27:20, he came home in 50th place overall – a great surge through the field and a grin as wide as a Cheshire cat – 'that's my first race since Jimmy's 10k in March 2016 – I'm delighted'.

Indecision overcome, race Director Brannigan sets off nearly a minute behind the rest of the field

At the sharp end Seamus Lynch made a rare appearance on the hills having focused over the last couple of years on cross-country, road running and the odd race on the track. He was up against Allan Bogle another man who has won Hill & Dale races in the past. The two climbed together in this the shortest race of the series and then Lynch surged to pull away and win easily in 20:47, 43 seconds clear. Timothy Johnston came home in 3rd in 22:24.

The men's 1,2,3 – Johnston, Lynch & Bogle

In the ladies section Esther Dickson, the 2017 Champion, remained dominant winning easily in 28:58 and her 4th victory of the series. She was ahead of Gillian Wasson in 26:57 (1st W40) and Shileen O'Kane in 27:13 (1st W45).

After the race director's pre-race speech the midges descended in traditional fashion – but race starter and official timer Frank Morgan came prepared…

The Murlough Crew

It is normal that the report on the race would carry thanks to all who helped and even name them individually but this week there aren't just enough words – there literally aren't enough words.

BOGBOY

Drinnahilly Results (Race 11 Hill & Dale)

1	Lynch, Seamus	00:20:47	MOpen	Newcastle AC*
2	Bogle, Allan	00:21:30	MOpen	City of Derry*
3	Johnston, Timothy	00:22:24	MOpen	Mourne Runners*
4	Hicks, David	00:23:11	MV35	Newcastle AC*
5	Gartland, John-Paul	00:23:14	MV35	Unattached
6	McConville, Barry	00:23:42	MOpen	Newcastle AC*
7	McKee, John	00:23:46	MJunior	Mourne Runners*
8	Scott, Jonathan	00:23:49	MOpen	Mourne Runners*
9	Higgins, Patrick	00:23:56	MOpen	Newcastle AC*
10	Quinn, Lorcan	00:24:10	MOpen	Unattached
11	Pascoe, Colin	00:24:14	MV35	BARF*
12	Bailey, Clive	00:24:17	MV40	Mourne Runners*
13	Andrews, Neil	00:24:23	MOpen	East Down AC*
14	Smylie, Ciaran	00:24:24	MV40	Banbridge AC*
15	Brennan, Alex	00:24:28	MV40	Unattached
16	Bell, Richard	00:24:38	MV40	Mourne Runners*
17	Kelly, John	00:24:40	MV50	Newcastle AC*
18	Mackinnon, Kerr	00:24:54	MOpen	Unattached
19	Brennan, Oisin	00:25:05	MJunior	Springwell*
20	Macauley, Gareth	00:25:09	MOpen	Newcastle AC*
21	Le Blanc, Paul	00:25:12	MV55	Newry AC*
22	Weir, Mark	00:25:43	MV45	North Down AC*
23	McNally, Stephen	00:25:45	MV35	Newcastle AC*
24	McCloy, Jonathan	00:25:52	MOpen	Ballymena Runners*
25	Kelly, Nigel	00:25:54	MV35	Ballydrain Harriers*
26	Dickson, Esther	00:25:58	FOpen	Newry AC*
27	Magee, Bryan	00:26:10	MV45	Larne AC*
28	Dobbs, Michael	00:26:14	MV40	City of Lisburn*
29	McKibbin, Marty	00:26:16	MOpen	Dundrum CLG
30	McGreevy, Cathal	00:26:22	MV45	Newry AC*
31	McGimpsey, Garth	00:26:23	MV35	Mourne Runners*
32	Livingstone, Chris	00:26:24	MV40	Seapark AC*
33	McCullagh, Paul	00:26:26	MV55	City of Lisburn*
34	Havern, Brendan	00:26:28	MV35	Unattached
35	Casey, Mark	00:26:30	MV35	Unattached
36	Gregg, Andy	00:26:35	MV50	Larne AC*
37	Alexander, Mark	00:26:38	MV45	Ballymena Runners*
38	Kelly, Colm	00:26:43	MV35	BARF*
39	Graham, David	00:26:46	MV45	Armagh AC *
40	Brown, Jim	00:26:48	MV55	BARF*
41	Heanen, Adam	00:26:50	MV35	NI Civil Service AC*
42	Brady, Owen	00:26:51	MV35	Newcastle AC*
43	Niblock, Iain	00:26:56	MOpen	Unattached
44	Wasson, Gillian	00:26:57	FV40	Ballymena Runners*
45	Marks, William	00:26:59	MV40	Mourne Runners*
46	Nugent, Francis	00:27:01	MV50	Blaney Rockets*
47	Todd, Steven	00:27:02	MV45	DUB Runners*
48	O'Kane, Shileen	00:27:13	FV45	Lagan Valley AC*
49	McDonald, Ryan	00:27:17	MV35	Newcastle AC*
50	Brannigan, Damien	00:27:20	MV45	Newcastle AC*

51	Dorman, Laurence	00:27:22	MV40	Mourne Runners*
52	Hughes, Barry	00:27:25	MOpen	Unattached
53	McQuaid, Brendan	00:27:27	MV35	Newcastle AC*
54	Lowry, Tim	00:27:31	MV40	Ballymena Runners*
55	Brennan, Colin	00:27:34	MV50	Springwell*
56	Gorman, Frankie	00:27:42	MV50	Blaney Rockets*
57	Hynds, Gavin	00:27:44	MV35	East Down AC*
58	**Donaldson, Merwyn**	**00:27:50**	**MV60**	**Unattached**
59	Ritchie, Alan	00:27:57	MOpen	Armagh AC *
60	Buchanan, David	00:28:03	MV35	BARF*
61	McKinley, Anthony	00:28:05	MV35	Albertville Harriers *
62	Flynn, Mickey	00:28:06	MV35	Newcastle AC*
63	Poland, Simon	00:28:09	MV40	Newcastle AC*
64	Larkin, Jim	00:28:10	MV40	DUB Runners*
65	Mallon, Paddy	00:28:15	MV50	BARF*
66	Oram, Hugh	00:28:19	MV40	Murlough AC*
67	Troeng, Mari	00:28:21	FOpen	Newcastle AC*
68	Murdock, Gareth	00:28:23	MV35	Burren AC*
69	Graham, Stephen	00:28:25	MOpen	Newcastle AC*
70	Gibney, Niall	00:28:29	MV40	Unattached
71	**Kellett, Niamh**	**00:28:30**	**FV35**	**East Down AC***
72	O'Kane, Bernadette	00:28:31	FOpen	DUB Runners*
73	Perry, Amanda	00:28:37	FV45	Ballydrain Harriers*
74	Matthews, Colin	00:28:42	MV35	Unattached
75	Kelly, Jonny	00:28:43	MV40	East Down AC*
76	Ragg, Chris	00:28:49	MV35	Unattached
77	Barr, Luke	00:28:50	MOpen	FAI
78	Allen, David	00:28:52	MV55	Albertville Harriers *
79	McGrellis, Declan	00:29:03	MV45	BARF*
80	Wallace, Andrew	00:29:05	MV45	Ballydrain Harriers*
81	Young, Kieran	00:29:06	MV35	Murlough AC*
82	McCullough, Mark	00:29:07	MOpen	Banbridge AC*
83	Kingston, Gerry	00:29:09	MV50	BARF*
84	Foster, Joanne	00:29:13	FV35	East Down AC*
85	Fegan, Thomas	00:29:16	MOpen	Unattached
86	Barr, Ronan	00:29:20	MOpen	Newcastle AC*
87	Woods, Patrick	00:29:24	MV35	Unattached
88	**Brennan, Molly**	**00:29:26**	**FJunior**	**Springwell***
89	McNeilly, Sam	00:29:28	FOpen	Newcastle AC*
90	Malone, Anthony	00:29:50	MV35	Blaney Rockets*
91	Murney, Kevin	00:29:51	MV40	Burren AC*
92	Nicholson, Roger	00:29:53	MV50	BARF*
93	Magill, Stewart	00:29:54	MV40	Unattached
94	Edgar, Paul	00:29:55	MV40	Ballydrain Harriers*
95	McEvoy, Peter	00:29:56	MOpen	Unattached
96	**McGuckin, Peter**	**00:29:59**	**MV65**	**Unattached**
97	Cassidy, Stephen	00:30:01	MV45	Murlough AC*

98	McConaghy, Martin	00:30:04	MV40	St Peters*
99	Marshall, Darren	00:30:12	MV40	Orangegrove AC*
100	Patterson, Richard	00:30:13	MOpen	University of Ulster AC*
101	Rice, Shane	00:30:15	MOpen	Newcastle AC*
102	McCann, Eugene	00:30:18	MV55	Newcastle AC*
103	Mallon, Eamonn	00:30:21	MV50	Newcastle AC*
104	Conlon, Jason	00:30:24	MOpen	Newcastle AC*
105	Pruzina, Mark	00:30:25	MV50	BARF*
106	Keys, Dianne	00:30:27	FV40	Unattached
107	O'Higgins, John	00:30:33	MOpen	Newcastle AC*
108	Bell, Craig	00:30:36	MV45	Unattached
109	Magowan, Lyndsey Jane	00:30:37	FOpen	Unattached
110	O'Donoghue, Michael	00:30:39	MV40	Orangegrove AC*
111	Martin, Nigel	00:30:42	MV50	Scrabo Striders*
112	McKinley, Johnny	00:30:44	MV45	Dromore AC*
113	Neville, Grace Elizabeth	00:30:52	FOpen	Newcastle AC*
114	Farnan, Shirley	00:30:53	FV45	Physio & Co
115	Spence, Lynne	00:30:59	FOpen	Mourne Runners*
116	McCormick, Declan	00:31:00	MV55	Murlough AC*
117	McNamara, Kieran	00:31:09	MOpen	Scrabo Striders*
118	Elliott, Mark	00:31:11	MV45	Ballydrain Harriers*
119	Peters, Brian	00:31:14	MV50	Unattached
120	Boyce, Evan	00:31:15	MV40	Ballydrain Harriers*
121	Farnan, Conor	00:31:20	MV45	Physio & Co
122	McQuillan, Charlie	00:31:21	MV35	Jog Moira
123	O'Neill, Stephen	00:31:22	MV50	Newry City Runners*
124	McCrory, Declan	00:31:24	MV50	Armagh AC *
125	McNamara, Tadgh	00:31:25	MV35	Newcastle AC*
126	Morrow, Conor	00:31:26	MOpen	Not the Sunday Run
127	Magee, Declan	00:31:28	MV50	Newcastle AC*
128	Mynes, Ronan	00:31:29	MV45	Team Purple
129	McCormac, Paul	00:31:42	MV50	Physio & Co
130	Wilson, Brian	00:31:45	MV50	East Down AC*
131	McAlister, Wilson	00:31:47	MV55	Jog Moira
132	Devlin, Colm	00:31:52	MV50	Murlough AC*
133	McKeag, Nicky	00:31:55	FV40	Ballydrain Harriers*
134	Herron, Darren	00:32:09	MV35	Mourne Runners*
135	Lemoine, Patrick	00:32:33	MV50	Unattached
136	Murray, Christine	00:32:39	FV45	Co. Antrim Harriers*
137	Lynch, Laura	00:32:48	FOpen	Murlough AC*
138	Baron, Adrian	00:33:01	MV55	ACKC
139	McAleenan, Ciaran	00:33:04	MV55	Mourne Runners*
140	Steen, Alan	00:33:06	MV35	Scrabo Striders*
141	McKenna, Frank	00:33:10	MV55	Newry City Runners*
142	Barnett, Mike	00:33:13	MV40	Newry City Runners*
143	Graham, John	00:33:20	MV55	Mourne Runners*
144	Fulcher, Dave	00:33:29	MV55	Murlough AC*

145	Campbell, Clarke	00:33:32	MV45	BARF*
146	McCullough, Paul	00:33:37	MV55	Banbridge AC*
147	Looby, Sean	00:33:40	MV35	Murlough AC*
148	**McElroy, Orla**	**00:33:42**	**FV50**	**NIMRA**
149	McDonald, Paddy	00:33:43	MV45	East Down AC*
150	Storey, Wayne	00:33:45	MV40	Unattached
151	Neeson, Michael	00:33:47	MV35	Murlough AC*
152	Rowe, Gerard	00:33:53	MV50	Murlough AC*
153	Hughes, David	00:33:57	MOpen	Mourne Runners*
154	Rice, Sean	00:33:59	MV50	Newcastle AC*
155	Dunn, Stephen	00:34:00	MV45	St Peters*
156	Herron, Beverley	00:34:01	FOpen	Mourne Runners*
157	O'Hagan, Kookie	00:34:05	MV60	Newry AC*
158	Burns, Kevin	00:34:10	MV40	Quick & Dead Runners
159	Morrow, Michael	00:34:12	MV60	Not the Sunday Run
160	**Carson, Suz**	**00:34:14**	**FV55**	**Fell Ponies**
161	McRitchie, Daniel	00:34:15	MOpen	Unattached
162	Johnston, Ian	00:34:16	MV50	Unattached
163	Butler, Patrick	00:34:20	MV40	Unattached
164	Purdon, Mark	00:34:22	MV50	Ballydrain Harriers*
165	Aiken, Ruth	00:34:23	FV35	Dromore AC*
166	Glass, David	00:34:26	MV50	Unattached
167	Weir, Clive	00:34:28	MV45	Newry City Runners*
168	McCauley, Joanne	00:34:30	FV40	St Peters*
169	Cowan, Ricky	00:34:32	MV65	Mourne Runners*
170	Bridge, Andy	00:34:43	MV50	BARF*
171	**Strickland, Fred**	**00:34:51**	**MV70**	**Ballydrain Harriers***
172	Knight, Stephen	00:34:57	MV50	Newcastle AC*
173	Rainey, Eoghan	00:34:59	MV40	Orangegrove AC*
174	Brogan, Martin	00:35:11	MV45	Newcastle AC*
175	Simons, Fionnuala	00:35:25	FOpen	Murlough AC*
176	Boylan, Paul	00:35:27	MOpen	Unattached
177	Murray, Janine	00:35:29	FOpen	East Down AC*
178	Mathers, Nicola	00:35:40	FV35	Murlough AC*
179	Robinson, Judith	00:35:52	FV50	Murlough AC*
180	O'Hagan, Ruben	00:35:56	MV40	Ballymena Runners*
181	Graham, Peter	00:36:04	MV55	Newry Tri Club
182	**McKeown, Janet**	**00:36:06**	**FV60**	**Unattached**
183	Todd, Samuel	00:36:18	MV50	Co. Antrim Harriers*
184	O'Brien, Colm	00:36:25	MV50	Newry City Runners*
185	McCormick, Ann	00:36:27	0	Murlough AC*
186	Robinson Getty, Kathryn	00:36:30	FV35	Unattached
187	Dickenson, Sharon	00:36:59	FV40	Orangegrove AC*
188	McKeown, Gareth	00:37:10	MV50	BARF*
189	McCullough, Ian	00:37:16	MV70	BARF*
190	Kamyk, Arkadiusz	00:37:18	MV35	Unattached
191	Donnelly, Emma	00:37:21	FV40	Ballycastle Runners*

192	Kennedy, Gemma	00:37:24	FV35	Ballymena Runners*
193	Aiken, Ruth	00:37:25	FV40	Ballymena Runners*
194	O'Neill, Noleen	00:37:26	FV45	Banbridge AC*
195	McCann, Damian	00:37:30	MV45	Newry City Runners*
196	Purdon, Wendy	00:37:37	FV45	Ballydrain Harriers*
197	Milligan, Sean	00:37:46	MV40	Unattached
198	Quinn, Mary	00:37:51	FV50	Newry City Runners*
199	Murphy, Lorna	00:37:53	FV50	Newry City Runners*
200	Morgan, Joy	00:37:55	FV50	Newry City Runners*
201	Graham, Liz	00:37:56	FV50	Newry City Runners*
202	O'Hare, Matthew	00:38:02	MV55	Unattached
203	Carole, Jourdan	00:38:03	FOpen	Unattached
204	Spence, Andy	00:38:07	MV40	Murlough AC*
205	Lewis, Karen	00:38:13	FV40	Banbridge AC*
206	Nugent, Connell	00:38:19	MV55	Newcastle AC*
207	Waterworth, Stephen	00:38:33	MV40	BARF*
208	Boylan, Gerald	00:38:45	MV40	Newcastle AC*
209	McGibbon, Andrew	00:38:50	MV45	BARF*
210	Adgey, John	00:39:11	MV70	Unattached
211	O'Hagan, Denise	00:39:42	FV40	BARF*
212	Taylor, Ian	00:40:07	MV65	BARF*
213	McBride, Colette	00:40:35	FV45	Murlough AC*
214	Fitzpatrick, Lorna	00:42:16	FV45	Murlough AC*
215	McKay, Sarah	00:42:29	FV40	Murlough AC*
216	O'Hara, Pauline	00:43:19	FV50	BARF*