

**ROAD-RUNNING** Exbury 10k Road Race

# West heads the gang of three

**THERE** were more runners in the 2009 Exbury 10k Road Race when it returned to the lanes of the New Forest for its second year.

The entry limit was expanded to 350 but the places had still been snapped up by mid February.

Fears of road congestion around the area never materialised and the weather responded with a perfect early spring morning.

Hardley Runners, as race organisers, along with race sponsors Exbury Gardens, now use the event to formally commence the season at the famous gardens - and have found the almost perfect blend of location and safety for a race growing in popularity.

The quiet roads and scenic Solent views made for an attractive backdrop.

The field started within the gardens before heading coast-bound towards Lepe foreshore and a section of out-and-back racing beside the Solent before taking a parallel road back inland to Exbury village and a final kilometre circuit through the grounds, surrounded by the shrubs sprouting their spring buds.

On the competitive side there were three men who didn't wait for the pack.

By the halfway point at Lepe there was a short Indian file of

Matt West (Winchester), Andy Kellaway (Hardley) and Simon McMorran (on an away day from the Isle of Wight AC), each running in their own personal window.

West had built a fair lead by the time he entered the gardens and secured his win in 36 minutes 7 seconds from Kellaway (36.49) and McMorran (37.43) with the main body of chasing runners not far behind.

Just a little way back, among the leading club runners, there was a battle between three ladies vying for top spot.

At halfway only 30 seconds separated all three but once they turned up the slope for the home run it was Lynn Whittaker from Romsey who pulled out all the stops to ease a minute clear (winning in 41:06) from club-mate Amanda Hull (42:06) and Carly Donaldson of Southampton Running Club close up third in 42:09.

Host club Hardley Runners gained full reward for staging the event as their men secured the team title, while the Romsey Ladies made their short trip into the Forest worthwhile as they won their team gold.

The 304 finishers were doubtless placing the race in their 2010 calendar almost as soon as they crossed the finish line.

The event provided a welcome break from the cut and thrust of league competition which returns to the area on March 29 at the Eastleigh 10k.



**OUT IN FRONT:** Eventual winner Matt West leads the race at Lepe around the halfway mark. Inset: Lynn Whittaker wins the ladies race.