Maravan Double –Cleethorpes – 22/23 November 2014 – Ian Richardson

It is hard to imagine why anyone would want to run 7 times around and through Europe’s largest caravan park, twice, and in fact I didn’t.

This is a new event, organised very much in line with the ethos of the NEMC and as such, I decided to go along and support it.

In keeping with the spirit of the event, I rented a caravan on the site to stay in.

Arriving in the dark on Friday I was guided to my home for the weekend. It was a fairly old but very well looked after vehicle and well suited to my requirements.

There was an optional registration on the Friday evening at a nearby pub, so I set off to do that. During the 20 minute walk, (my caravan was as far away as you could get and still be on the park) the rain started.

I was greeted in the pub by Darren, the RD, and handed my number. I had a chat with a couple of others and then decided to head back to avoid the worst of the rain. This was not a success and I was like a drowned rat when I got back.

The rain stopped during the night and I joined the almost 50 others outside the Spar shop on the site for the start. It was to be a short section of about .3 of a mile, then seven laps, so that the finish was further away than the start for me.

The sky could best be described as leaden, but it was fairly mild and stayed dry the whole time.

As well as marathon runners, there were also some relay teams. These could consist of any number of runners, as long as they completed the distance between them.

Those runners with kit and drink to drop off, handed them to relay runners who were at the start but not running the first leg and they took it to the lap finish point.

9a.m. and off we went, deep into caravan land. The scale of the park was enormous, with names for each section. Some of these names were taken from California, although Palm Springs seemed to be stretching the imagination somewhat.

It was a relaxed start for most as we started to spread out and have a chat here and there.

It was also an opportunity to start and recognise the signage. It was mostly yellow and black tape with some laminated signs. This was supplemented by some arrows on the road, which were added to during the event.

It was very well signed and those of us (me included) who occasionally went astray, had only ourselves to blame for a lapse in concentration.

The lap crossed the main road into the park twice and although there were few visitors at this time of year, marshals on those crossings kept us all safe.

We certainly got to see a lot of the site. Early on we passed the area for tourers, which had one lone motorhome in it, which could well have belonged to a runner. After that it was around the back of the Funworld entertainment complex and along the edge of the Humberston Fitties. These are holiday homes but permanently built rather than caravans. Despite this, I believe that they are not supposed to be occupied twelve months of the year, but quite a lot looked as if they were. They varied tremendously in size and quality. Some looked a lot like post war prefabs, then there were wooden ranch styles and expensive brick bungalows and some that would not be out of place on an allotment, built out of anything that came to hand.

Apparently Robert Wyatt lives there, but I didn’t see him.

After the Fitties we went through the golf course, which was very pleasant.

This was followed by one of the few off road sections and the rain had not made it an issue at this point. There was a bit of puddle dodging, but that was it. I got to see my caravan at this part!

More enticingly named sections followed, redolent of warmer climes, before a section on the main park road to the Spar and then to the lap finish. This was set up with water, coke and squash.

Later on cake appeared too, wonderful it was. Also present were a selection of chocolate sweets and some gels. All in all, a great selection.

As the relay runners gathered at this point, it was nice to hear their support as the rest of the course had no one on except some excellent volunteers.

After the first lap, it was pretty much a case of settling into a rhythm and trying not to miss signs, whilst chatting to other runners.

I finished in 4:29:30. Really rather slow for the effort put in, but there you go.

The splendid goody bag contained beer, crisps, a stick of Cleethorpes rock, and some embrocation packets. A good haul, complemented by a decent medal.

Now then, day two.

I was awoken before 6am by thunderous rain pounding down on the metal roof of my humble abode. It had been forecast, but it was still unpleasant to hear. I got up, somewhat later, to make a cup of tea, and looked out at a dark grey caravanscape, with rain lashing down. The whole thing looked incredibly uninviting and having done day 1, I didn’t feel the necessity to do it all again on day 2. Full credit to those who did.

My consolation is that I left with very good memories of a well organised first event for Darren, and the thought that I would be very happy to do it again.

Ian Richardson

25 November 2014