Caythorpe Canter - 11 April 2015.

I first ran this some three years ago and was looking forward to returning.

It seems to have started out life as a walking event that welcomed runners, but now is pretty much a running event that welcomes walkers. This was evidenced by us being given race numbers, rather than tallies or wristbands this year.

The event start and finish is the cricket pavilion in the village of Caythorpe in Lincolnshire and the funds from the event go to various village projects. One of those earlier projects was the development of changing facilities in the pavilion and they really are excellent. Lots of lovely warm showers.

I am getting ahead of myself here by some hours as the day began with parking up off the playing area and registering in the pavilion.

As well as the number, we had a marked OS map and a comprehensive set of LDWA-type instructions. Happily, neither was really needed, as the course was pretty well marked.

Start for the marathon was due to be 08:30, with the half going at 09:30. This changed such that we set off at 09:00 and the others at 09:15. I’m not sure why, but it may have been to do with the rain slanting down in the strong wind. It was due to blow over, so it may have been to spare us the worst. It gave time to have a mug of tea before the start.

As we stood ready for the off, I looked at my fellow runners. It still amazes me how little some wear, regardless of conditions. It’s not as if it were an Olympic final!

Needless to say, the soft northerner was dressed like Nanook of the North, so I was quite oblivious to a lot of the rain and wind.

Off we went and were soon out of the village and onto decent tracks, heading broadly west before turning into Stubton and its village hall at 6 miles, for the first checkpoint and drinks/food station.

Glass of squash and a penguin and I was off again. It was another 8 miles to the next station, so I was carrying supplies.

We headed mostly south and south east through the village of Hougham, where I missed an orange arrow indicating a right and had to retrace my steps..

Onwards using roads, tracks and some field edges to the school at Barkston where jam or peanut butter sandwiches were available.

Turning right after the church there was a long drag along a road, eventually passing an airfield and crossing a road. This is apparently the old Roman road of Ermine Street, now rather more prosaically known as the B6403.

I went wrong at this last time as I was running with someone who had done the route several times previously and “knew the way”.

No issues this time as there were two marshals and a lot of orange paint to make sure that the group of six of which I was a part, went the right side of the hedge.

Crossing fields we made for another road, turning generally north and west and into the teeth of the mounting wind.

The temperature could vary considerably between sunny parts out of the wind and the exposed fields when the clouds obscured the sun, so overall I was pleased that I had kept wrapped up.

The last food and drink station (fruit cake, lovely) was at Ancaster and about 21 miles.

Then it was the push to the end. By this time I was tiring and combined with the wind and some awkward terrain crossing fields, I was walking in places, but as soon as a decent surface was underfoot and there was a bit of protection from the wind from hedges, I was away again.

The spire of the church in Caythorpe was visible from a considerable distance and it was gratifying to see it get closer.

On reaching the end, I received a medal and was pointed into the pavilion where those splendid showers were put to good use.

I must then mention the spread of food at the end. The pool table in the pavilion had been covered and it had a wide range of cakes, pastries, sandwiches and desserts.

As a savoury person, I can confirm that my tea was washed down with egg, cheese and onion and tuna sandwiches.

It was only a shame to have to leave for the three hour drive home.

Before leaving, I received a certificate of my modest performance, and another cheese and onion sandwich to see me as far as the car.

It’s a long way to go, but a great event and fabulous value at £15. I’m sure there was a prize for the person who had travelled the furthest to run it. I wonder who had come from farther afield than me?

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