Kelso Racecourse Marathon – 8 March 2015.

Early March in the Borders. The weather was bound to be nice wasn’t it?

The Saturday had seen 50mph winds, so almost anything was going to be better.

As we wound our way up the A697 early on Sunday morning, it was a nice day.

The racecourse and associated golf course are just before you enter Kelso proper and there was plenty of parking in the adjacent ice rink.

Registration was in the golf club house and very straightforward given that there were only 30 some entrants. The NEMC had a good turnout, including Keith and Melanie and also Richard Raw, who has just rejoined and wore the new club shirt that Keith had brought up for him.

Standing in the very short queue for our numbers, it was apparent that we had crossed the border when I looked at the chalkboard of available food. Top of the list was haggis, neeps and tatties!

Leaving bags in the changing rooms, we made for the lap start/finish.

The race director, Chris Renton, had been given the idea for this event from our own Newcastle Racecourse and it followed a similar format. The course was measured and as it was a 1.11 mile lap, the actual start was about half way around the course, with this half lap being followed by 23 full laps.

The start/finish had a gazebo on one side with lap counters and relay runners and the gazebo on the inside of the course had water and SIS drink in plastic cups, as well as jelly babies and bits of bananas. You could also leave your own food/drink/clothing there.

As we made our way to the race start, I couldn’t help but notice that the track was nothing like the one at Newcastle Racecourse. It was a much rougher surface than our own racecourse. Perfectly fine, just needed a bit of attention when running, in some places. It helps to give you something to focus on!

Shortly after 9a.m. and we were on our way. Immediately into a head wind for a good half of the lap. It wasn’t too bad early on and we seemed to be going to be lucky.

It took me a while to settle down, having been ill the previous couple of days, but by lap four or five the rhythm was beginning to come. Sadly, so was the wind. External wind that is, not related to my being a bit unwell!

Each lap, near where the race start was, we would head around into the wind and it was becoming a real effort to make forward progress. On a few occasions this would also be accompanied by horizontal rain, which was most unwelcome.

The drinks station seemed to be manned by members of the Rotary Club who were supporting Chris in his fund raising efforts for Scottish mental health and the Brathay Trust. They were very encouraging and it was great to see them and have a word or two each lap.

I made half way in 2 hours, which meant that my hoped for sub 4 was not realistic with the wind really taking its toll.

The nature of the lap event is that you get to see everybody, sometimes several times as the fast folk kept lapping me and I lapped some of the slower ones. It also meant that as time went by, there were fewer and fewer out on the course.

I eventually finished in 4:09, feeling as if I had put in much more effort than the time indicated.

The finish was accompanied by a decent medal and a goody bag with some gels, a chewy bar, chocolate bar, bottle of water and some leaflets. A good haul.

After going over to the drinks station to thank the volunteers, it was back to get changed. Showers were available for the men and looked fine, but I settled for a quick change. Then a cup of tea in the bar and chats with other runners and it was on the road back home.

This is a lovely little event, very much in the spirit of NEMC events and deserves to be much better supported, particularly as it supports worthwhile charities.

Ian Richardson

13 March 2015