Longford Marathon – 30 August 2015.

Having left Achill, Stevie, George, Ivan and I made our way east to Longford, to try and get to registration before its published closing time. There was also a pasta party, and being keen on a good feed, I really wanted to get there in time.

We parked up in the old barracks car park, which was the main car park for the following day and walked a couple of minutes to the Longford Arms Hotel, which was hosting registration and the pasta party.

Registration itself was very straightforward. We picked up our number and chip and then went to another table to be given a T shirt and a very extensive goody bag. I can hardly remember all of it, but it included a very good magazine about the race, with all entrants, plus many pictures and results from the previous year.

In addition there were many food items, packets of seeds to eat, chocolate bars, Haribo, and energy drink, sachets of instant chocolate and bread products from the splendidly named head line sponsor, Pat the Baker.

I’m sure I’ve missed a few things off the list.

The pasta was also very nice and very welcome after the day’s earlier exertions in Achill.

It was an early start the next morning as Stevie and George had again opted to start with the walkers and ultra runners at 08:30, 90 minutes before the full and half set off. George wisely decided that two in two days was a bit much and called it a day after a few miles.

Not sure of the exact numbers, but there were approximately 200 in the full and 300 in the half.

Ivan and I had a chance for a chat as our races stayed together for the first three miles before he split off left and I then started to take in more of my surroundings.

Conditions were very different to Achill. It was very flat, on sometimes busy roads and country lanes, and there was no wind.

The first few miles out of Longford headed west on the main road back to Mayo. There was a big Gaelic football match that afternoon with Co Mayo playing in Dublin, so there was a constant stream of cars coming towards us, tooting their horns, cheering and waving their green and red checked flags. (They lost). Their presence was quite entertaining and helped some of those early miles pass quite quickly before we turned onto a quieter road.

Race markings and marshalling were very good. Drinks stations were flagged well in advance and there were some Portaloos on the course, which were also signed in advance.

It was a fairly uneventful course as we made or way through villages and hamlets and back country lanes past the occasional house. One or two people had set up their own drinks stations for runners, outside their houses, and these were very welcome on what was becoming a rather warm day.

The previous day’s efforts were taking their toll and I was getting progressively slower in the second half.

This wasn’t really helped by long stretches on a main road, which were fairly uninspiring.

Eventually we came back into Longford itself and I saw the other three of our party on the final corner, which was a good moment.

We were given a nice big, chunky medal at the end and then had use of the leisure centre for a shower.

There was food put on afterwards, but all the good stuff seemed to have been put out at once and scoffed by the half marathon runners. For us marathon folk there was only sliced meat and some of Pat the Bakers finest offerings, which was a shame, especially for the no meat eaters.

For a fairly small event, the organisers had done a great job before, during and after the event to ensure a really good atmosphere where runners were very much welcomed.

This event has been running for a number of years now and the organisation is to be applauded. It may not be the most interesting course, but coupled with Achill, makes for a great double weekend.

Ian Richardson

30 September 2015.