***Mike’s October Marathon***

In keeping with my aim of local marathons I had planned to take part in the Kleder Marathon (Sun 4th October). However, best laid plans and all that meant that I failed to register in time and the event was full. Plan B look for new marathon weekend of 4th October as next planned marathon is Newcastle Town Moor 1st November.

Two possibilities – Colchester or Mablethorpe and having ran Colchester in 2014 I signed up for Mablethorpe not really knowing how far down south it was (past Hull, beside Lincoln and up from Skegness) which meant a drive down on the Saturday, overnight stay, 500 plus miles (return) and the plan of keeping local blown away!

The drive down on the Saturday was uneventful with the highlights; road works at scots corner, Drax power station or complex as there appeared to be three or four such large plants and lots of coal (what chance for the planet or carbon saving)! I also past the Range distribution hub (mega big) and fields of white vans all shapes and sizes (waiting for the promised recovery) and arrived at the hotel in Louth approx. half an hour from Mablethorpe. The room was basic had what you needed functional rather than luxury and past the night watching England loose to Australia and go out of the rugby world cup.

The only positive thing about Breakfast next morning was the fact that it started early, they could not do porridge (thankfully I had brought my own) and with tea toast etc. set off towards Mablethorpe, followed the signs to the start and free car park at the events base Mablethorpe Monks’ Dyke Tennyson College.

Mablethorpe is a traditional seaside resort, with the seafront having been designed with children in mind with the award winning beach, traditional donkey rides and popular funfair plus lots of mobile homes and holiday parks.

I wondered around the college, finding the changing room with showers, indoor and outside portable toilets, baggage area and signed the partition as the local school was under treat of closer with the fear of children being bussed to Louth! Mablethorpe marathon tag line is the “friendly one” not clear why this is and my experience was that it was no more friendly than most “town” marathons.

The event organisers had two events a half marathon (427 runners) and full marathon (172 runners), starting at the same time (9.30am) with the marathon being two laps of the course. The events charity partners who provide many of the volunteers were the Royal British Legion whose logo was on the events t-shirt. The start area was crowded with a variety of running ability despite signs advertising approx. finish time zones, but not surprising unless the zones are controlled and supervised. In the pre-race pack I had received my race number and disposable chip timing tag (attached to one of your running shoes) ensuring an arcuate personal finish chip time, this does seem the current favourite method of recording chip times.

At the sound of the gun we were off and the first 2 miles involved running a zig zag pattern (up one down next back up) along three adjoining street before emerging onto the main A1104 for a few hundred yards, then turning left to the first of four water points (just water) on the first lap (3, 6, 8, 11.5 miles) before disappearing along long strait asphalt roads/tracks into the flat recently ploughed rich farming land, passing odd holiday parks before arriving by mile 11 @ Sutton-on-Sea, up a steep ramp onto the central promenade with sandy beach, beach huts and calm seas, continuing along north promenade and leaving the promenade at the café, down a ramp @ radio stepters just prior to the 13mile marker and onto the main road back to the front of the College.

Lap 2 was much calmer with just us marathon runners left and the 13mile water point was outside the ironically named Whispering Waters Holiday Parks as we followed a slightly different route that avoided the zig zag but still emerged onto the main road just before the turning to the 15mile water point and back out along the same strait flat asphalt tracks passing water points (with jelly babies) @ 18 & 20 mile.

The layout of the course meant there was little vocal support except along the promenades. As I arrived for the second time @ Sutton-on-Sea instead of going up the ramp we went right and ran around a local estate (to make up the mileage) passing a water point @ 24 mile before returning to the ramp, promenades and under 2 miles to the finish line crossing in a chip time of 4:01:30 (in 107 place, 2nd in age group) again just outside the 4hour barrier but 30 seconds quicker than at Aberfeldy.

I had to go back inside the College to retrieve my bag collect my finished t-shirt and medal (included myfinishtime stickers that you could remove the numbers corresponding to your finish time). The medal was presented by the local mayor (a nice touch). Showers were hot, car park had emptied, received text from the organisers confirming my race times and after a short relax prepared for the long 4hour plus drive back home.

This must be one of the flattest marathon courses within the UK but equally one of the most boring (unless you like long flat strait roads) oh how was I looking forward to an undulating recovery run. It is a pity that they started both races together, as apart from the crowded start it took a long time for runners to get into and alongside similar pace runners. I note (but did not see) that Roy Young running for Ackworth Road Runners (but member of NEMC) warring the number 100 achieved that remarkable feat of running 100 marathons well done Roy.

I may not be back but it’s one that more members and runners should look at and take part in.

Mike Trant