Orrell – OMG – 28 December 2014

23 x 1.14mile laps around the streets of Orrell. That seemed like a nice way to spend a Sunday between Christmas and the New Year. It also gave me 25 marathons for the year.

I did an event organised by the same people on Good Friday, which was a one mile lap around a country park near Wigan and really enjoyed it.

It was made more pleasurable by knowing that the recipient charity was Help for Heroes.

The previous one was a six hour event during which you could run any distance that you wished.

This one was from 9a.m. to 9p.m.. It was in fact full, but I was able to get an entry with a start of 11a.m.. By this time, the shorter distance runners would have gone, so I wouldn’t be clogging up the streets. It also meant that I could drive down on the day, rather than having to stay overnight.

It had been very cold on the Saturday night and the temperature was still hovering around freezing when I arrived, but the streets weren’t too icy. Apparently it was a different story at 9a.m., so that was another good aspect to the late start.

There was plenty of free parking about 100 yards from the pub, whose car park was the race HQ and lap start/finish.

A bag could be left just by the refreshment table, and portaloos were provided. There was also tea/coffee/hot chocolate available at a separate table.

After a brief explanation of the course, I was off at 10.55. One lap was enough to know where the slippy bits might be and to understand the nuances of the course. It was all on pavements and an anti-clockwise loop.

There were a few residential street entrances to cross and a school entrance where an event was taking place.

Additionally, there was a small Co-op, which had traffic entering and leaving. Mostly, drivers saw people with numbers and gave them priority at the crossing points, which was decent of them.

There was the usual mix of runners, with some additions. I had missed the 10k and half marathon runners, and soon realised that most of the others were not aiming much beyond a marathon. There were a few who were out to see how far they could go and some relay teams. One such team was two blokes running a lap at a time. Another was a group of four army cadets running five laps at a time. The third consisted of two people at a time, dressed in costumes which indicated that they had been helping out Santa a few days earlier. This all made it very friendly and non-competitive, as well had out own personal targets and challenges.

The lap was long enough to be varied and challenging in its own way.

Apart from the crossings, there was one long uphill and quite sharp downhill at the end of each lap.

I decided to take on refreshments every other lap and was particularly looking forward to the cakes. They had some great ones on Good Friday, so there was a high standard to keep up.

But….. there was no cake!

The refreshment table had water, High5 drink, some little cheesy biscuits, some haribo and no cake.

There was, however, a particularly nice flapjack. I took to breaking a piece off every other lap and it proved to be ideal distance running food. Near the end there were also some very nice homemade biscuits put out.

At 1p.m., there was a 5k event for young people. I saw them gathering, but they must have set off shortly before I finished a lap as I didn’t see any of them out on the course.

By about 1.30, or four and a half hours into the event, it became very quiet as most people seemed to have finished their run, leaving a few hardy souls and me to carry on.

The website had said that a marathon distance was 24 laps and as I started to calculate backwards based on my Garmin readings, I was sure that that would give me nearly 27.5 miles, so I was convinced that either my counting or the lap counters were incorrect.

At the end of lap 22, I had nearly 25.2 miles showing, so I asked for clarification and was told that it was, in fact, only 23 laps needed for the marathon distance.

This was rather splendid news and I bounced very happily around the last lap for a time of 4:06.

By this time the sun was very low and the ground threatening to refreeze, so I wasn’t tempted to keep going, as I might have done in better conditions.

After a cup of tea and a biscuit, I thanked all those involved in creating a lovely event and made my wh anefore I finished a laay to my hotel for the night.

It was a long drive there and then back the following day, but well worth it in my view, to support an event in a good cause and organised at a time when others shy away from organising events due to weather concerns.

I shall be watching out for future events by these people, as their low key and friendly nature very much appeals to me.

Ian Richardson

31 December 2014.