Wakefield Marathon – 28 June 2015.

I thought I’d give this two lap evan ent another try as I only managed the half last year, having worn myself out the day previously, running Hamsterley.

Not having learnt any sort of a lesson, this year I preceded it with an attempt on the Durham Dales Challenge. This is a 30 mile LDWA event, that I last ran in 2010.

I failed miserably, DNFing at 18 miles, completely devoid of energy and dehydrated.

As you may imagine, this was not ideal preparation for my second attempt at the Wakefield marathon.

I felt that there had been a number of issues with the course last year, but the organisers gave the impression of being people who would take that on board and seek to improve matters.

The first real improvement was the start. Nostell Priory sounded a great place to start and finish, but nearby roads and grassy hills to finish on were not very good and this year’s start a few miles away was very much better.

It was a small camping and caravan site in the area of Wintersett. Parking had been marked out for us with flags, registration was in a good sized rigid tent structure and there were a couple of portaloos. You will be gaining the fairly accurate impression that this was an event similar in a number of ways to our own, not least in size.

There was a chip issued with the race number, which seemed a bit unnecessary for this size of event and must have added quite a bit of cost.

On leaving the tent I met George and Michele, with Janette as their support team. I subsequently bumped into Anastasia. That was in the toilet queue!

The start was a good five minutes walk away, involving climbing over a high stile. I wasn’t looking forward to getting over it after the run.

In order to get the distance right, the half runners began 0.1 mile behind us and at 10:05 we were off.

I would like to have described where we ran but the nature of the course makes that rather difficult.

It was a course with no scary hills, just some undulations. The surface varied from quiet roads, cinder paths, cycle tracks like our waggon ways and earth paths through woods. All were of a very good standard with no need to watch your footing anywhere.

There were arrows on trees and fences that made route finding very simple, ensuring that you could not get lost.

George and Anastasia may choose to debate this point, having done so in the first mile!

It was starting to get really very warm and I was glad that I was carrying water with me, after the previous days dehydrating experience.

The drinks stations, serving water in cups, and some sweets, were at approximately 4, 9 and 12 miles. It would have been nice to have the 9 mile one a little earlier, but perhaps there was nowhere convenient to put it.

All the volunteers were extremely supportive and encouraging and added to my overall enjoyment of a really good and varied course.

I was feeling surprisingly well at the end of the first lap and actually looking forward to lap 2.

It was very quiet on this lap, having lost all of the half runners. This may be a good time to mention that there were 51 finishers in the full and 66 in the half.

The heat continued to increase and I was ever more grateful for the water I was carrying. Tactical walking breaks were employed in the last 6 miles, but I was still happy with how it was going and was passing people whilst not being passed myself. That’s always cheering!

Some of the mile markers were placed very optimistically, particularly the 26 mile one, where my Garmin read 25.2 miles. Those without such technology will have found it an exceedingly long 0.2 of a mile.

Some of this was around the water park and really very attractive, considering this had been largely a mining area. It was really nice to see how a landscape can be improved to provide amenities for the people living there.

Crossing the mat at the end, I was very happy to get my bottle of water, T shirt and medal, and to slump into a handy chair.

I could hear my name being called out, but no idea where from, as I hadn’t the strength to turn my head.

It was Michele, lying face down on a massage table about three feet away!

After a good natter and a bit of a recovery, it was back to the car and the long drive home.

I am so pleased that I came back to do this event. It has improved so much since last year and I can only wish the organisers all the best in growing it. It deserves a much bigger entry, which would still not detract from its low key charm.

I hope we can get more NEMC members to it next year.

I’ll be back.

Oh yes, that stile on the way back to the car park really was hard work!

Ian Richardson

30 June 2015.