

NORTHUMBERLAND COAST MARATHON August 19th 2012

This was the 3rd of our events in this year's 4 event series "Tour of Northumbria" It was also the 3rd running of the event itself which appears to be benefitting from positive word-of-mouth recommendation from previous participants. So much so that the event itself sold out it's entry limit of 100 months in advance this year and, if places had been available, there was approximately another 100 waiting to enter. I guess the moral is, enter this one early if it's on again next year.

As things turned out, as is common with marathon entries for some reason, there was the usual 25% plus of no-shows on the day. Those who failed to arrive missed a wonderful day out on the stunning Northumberland coast. Though thunderstorms were forecast for later in the day it was actually a beautiful sunny morning as the runners lined up on Alnmouth beach at 9.30am. Ahead of us lay 13 miles of beach, trail and coastal path north to the mid-point on Long Nanny Bridge at the southern end of Beadnell Bay. From there, a beach loop brought us back to the drinks station at Newton Steads and the journey home to the finish again at Alnmouth. The course remained close to the sea in both directions passing through Boulmer, Craster, Dunstanburgh Castle and Newton-by-the-Sea, taking in some magnificent coastal scenery en route.

Unfortunately for the runners, as the temperature increased so did the humidity, making uncomfortable conditions for running. It was only in the latter stages of the race that things cooled down and the predicted deluge arrived. By then though the faster runners had already finished allowing a dry presentation ceremony in the Red Lion beer garden. Despite the conditions some fast times were posted on the day. The NEMC's own Tim Bateson easily won the men's race in 3 hours 20:08, some 7 minutes ahead of his nearest competitor, Simon Green who was one of a number of entrants from the Porter Valley club in the top 10 in the field.

Perhaps the outstanding performance of the day, however, came from Alnwick Harriers Jo Gascoigne-Owens who ran a brilliant race to gradually overcome spirited opposition from Melanie Horan and Julia McLure to finish 6th overall, in a new female course record time of 3 hours 38:17, some 33 minutes faster than last year's winning time. As an Alnmouth resident, Jo was delighted to do so well on her home turf, (or should it be "beach")

Unfortunately, acting as "Sweeper" for the course in the absence of the 2 planned-for St John Ambulance cycle responders, meant that I missed not only the Presentation but also the chance to congratulate Tim, Jo and the other award winners on their performances. Speaking to other participants after the event and judging by written compliments already received it seems clear though that most people enjoyed their day on the coast despite the hot and humid conditions they'd had to overcome.

Jim Manford
August 20th 2012

Glad that's another one over and done with. No more worries – until next year maybe?



