

THE RADCLIFFE 6.5 MILE TRAIL RACE

The Fat Boy Reports:

That night the Ilkley Harriers travelling band consisted of:

- 1) Alison Eagle: out for a training sharpener;
- 2) Me good self: just wandering about as I do so well;
- 3) Pete Shields: there for a competitive bash on a new track, not to mention walloping a few “easy meat” Lancastrians;
- 4) Geoff Howard: sage, beer taster, vociferous cheer leader, support team and raconteur.

It was great to have some company on my return to the red rose county to compete in the Radcliffe trail race: I ran it in 2003 and having enjoyed myself had noted it as one for the future.

The race is a fund raiser for a local hospice; it's well organised and has a really nice friendly atmosphere.

So, having given ourselves sufficient time to negotiate the evening commuter traffic, we arrived at the Mason's Arms in good time, affording us thirty minutes or so for a leisurely change and warm up.

The race, whilst billed as a trail race, starts and finishes on tarmac – maybe half a mile or so at either end. However, for me this is not a significant negative. From the gun, I found the pace over the first 500 metres along Sion Street a bit giddy and as we climbed the gentle shale track up to the disused railway embankment it became apparent that I needed to ease back a tad, at which point the whole world seemed to come past me. Still: who cares? I do!

The surface of the track soon changed from tarmac to a sandy bridle path, then to a hardcore and earthen pathway, lined both sides by mature trees, shrubs and an assortment of vegetation, typical of the North of England.

By the first mile, Alison and Peter were away in the distance and not too long after, out of sight. Still, I was happy: I'd got myself into a rhythm and there were plenty of people to have a go at, not to mention those behind, breathing down my neck.

Around the half way point the trail ran parallel to the M62, then went under it and finally back over the bounciest pedestrian bridge I've encountered – Zebedee might have said.

Around this point I'd got myself into a good healthy tussle with a fellow seasoned harrier from Harwich RMI. We were both giving it eyeballs out for a couple of miles, then Lady Luck intervened as the poor fellow inhaled a fly. He spluttered to a halt, a bit like an old motorbike running out of petrol. It was "bye bye baby bye bye time.

After another half mile, Geoff was there giving me gentle words of encouragement, then down onto Sion Street and the finishing straight with Alison and Peter cheering me to the line.

On to the prize giving:

- Alison was second lady – trophy
- She was also first lady over 40 – two bottles of wine
- Pete Shields was first young man over 55 – half a gallon of beer
- Me good self was second over 55 – another half gallon of beer

Prize wise we cleaned up!

Reflecting as we did whilst flying back over the Pennines and chomping chunks of Alison's parkin, we concluded that it was a good job they didn't hold a raffle because we'd probably have won that as well.

A good course, good company and good fun.

Fat Boy