

NEAR PERFECT CONDITIONS FOR THE ABBEY DASH 2005

3289 runners assembled in a side street adjacent to the International Pool for 21st running of **THE LEEDS ABBEY DASH 10K**. Many would have found the 9.30 start unwelcome but they could not complain about the weather; not too cold, dry and only light winds to combat. The altered start allowed slightly more time before the swing right onto Wellington Street and the flat fast run out to Kirkstall Abbey.

Club vests at the sharp end had been replaced by vests showing representation for the North, South, Midlands, Wales etc. and indeed throughout the field runners had chosen to wear the amber HELP THE AGED t-shirt unusually received before the race with their race number and chip. With a "chip" attached to the shoe it could be said that it does not matter where you place yourself for the "off" as competitors actually receive a real time for the distance between the chip mats at the start and finish; unlike normal races where no account is taken for the lapse between gun and reaching the start time.

Nevertheless, having warmed up on the course, most Ilkley Harriers sensibly slotted themselves in quite close to the start line, charged away promptly and were not impeded by thousands behind. Your reporter was left with the task of carrying multiple bags back up to the finish, prompting one sympathetic passer-by to say,

"Never mind, pal, she might have you back eventually!"
Did I really look as if I had just been "kicked out"?

Meanwhile, Commonwealth Games 1500 metre runner Nick McCormick of Morpeth Harriers was first "out of the blocks" and first to finish. He lead the field out to Kirkstall and back recording a time of 29.17 in the colours of the North. Birhan Dagne of Belgrave Harriers was first lady back in 34.39 with Tracey Morris (Valley Striders), running here in the colours of Wales, continuing her comeback from injury, resulting in an Achilles tendon operation, in third position with a time of 35.13.

Graham Pearce running 35.51 was first harrier back and climbed to the top of this year's club 10K listings. (Cath Wolfenden still heads the ladies with probably only Clitheroe to be run for 2005.) Sally Malir was the only one "in the prizes" but Pat Lonergan finishing 4th over 50 as a F55 was perhaps left wondering why there was no F55 awards as there were for men. For the record, chip times and positions were

Graham Pearce	35.51 (92)
Jamie Hutchinson	36.05 (102)
Tim Ashelford	36.30 (146)
John Atkinson	37.00 (148)
Mark Iley	38.50 (229)
Andy Wiggans	39.07 (246)
Mark Teasey	40.26 (317)
Sally Malir (2ndF40)	40.28 (324)
Amanda Oddie (6thF35)	41.14 (374)
Andrew Herbert	41.49 (426)
Alison Bennet (7thF40)	41.57 (437)
Keith Wood	42.23 (484)

Vic Verecondi	44.11 (663)
Sue Bickerdike	44.32 (703)
Deborah Steele	45.08 (785)
Andrew Webster	46.57 (1023)
Pete Bednell	47.26 (1087)
Debbie Rosen	48.36 (1242)
Pat Lonergan (4 th F50)	48.39 (1246)
Bernie Connor	51.40 (1689)
John Coates	54.12 (2039)
Clare Smith	63.28 (2929)

With the voice of top coach and commentator Bud Baldaro booming from the P. A. system and hundreds cheering them home along the Headrow to the Town Hall these Harriers enjoyed (or endured ?) the big race experience for another year. Finally, one could only feel for Mark T. who having had a great run himself then had to stand and look forlornly for Sarah J.who had regrettably been forced to pull out. Let us hope the injury was not too severe and she is back to racing soon.