

Idle trail race, 2006

A very pleasant run out at the height of summer. Idle and Horsforth between them are carving various traffic free routes through the playground of my childhood in the woods below Rawdon. I say traffic free, today's variant included a two mile run along the canal on the way out, and this being Sunday morning a gauntlet of dogs, and cyclists of apparently varying ability when it came to negotiating a gap between oncoming runner and hedge / wall / steep drop to railway line had to be run. A drink at the halfway point was a thoughtful touch at this time of year, and a novelty for this (unique) distance of 6.42miles – don't ask!

The variation through the woods now avoids the long climb to the crematorium, a shame since someone has gone to considerable expense to resurface (I use the term loosely – it would still be best handled in a tracked vehicle; a tank, say) what used to be the most deeply cratered stretch of road this side of Beirut International Airport.

The two miles through the shade of the woods included a short run up some steps that satisfied the fell runner in Graham. At the top of the ginnel that followed I was reminded of Friday night's post navigation mix-up discussion with Iain G. Excuse the digression at this point but the conversation is well worth recounting:

DJ "so, at what point did you realise you had gone wrong [on a route on which it was hitherto thought impossible to go wrong]"

IG "when I got to the Sun Inn" (to put this in context he might as well have said, 'when I passed the boundary sign for York')

DJ "weren't you a bit worried?"

IG "well, there was nobody around, but you know me Dave, it was a hill, and I like running up hills".

Save to say Idle's exemplary marshalling included a marshal at the head of the ginnel directing us left, but as he wasn't running we shall never know whether Iain would have been able to resist the temptation of the steep and enticing climb beyond instead.

Anyway, the last mile or so was largely downhill, along more moderately loose tracks, then tarmac, before an unexpected diversion across the fields, including yet another new surface for me, freshly cut hay. Interesting for 100m or so, though not sure I'd want to make a habit of it. The finish this time was a straight dash in across the rugby fields, and none of the demoralising (n)ever decreasing circles torture that Horsforth had gone for when they first used this area, when the thrill of arrival at the finishing field soon gave way to intense depression at the realisation that there was still a mazy mile or so to run.

We thought we were well placed for the team prize, and would have been had Pudsey and Bramley gone to find some hills to run up instead, however, a thought for the future, any of our better ladies would have taken top three places, and with the sort of turnout we get at a HSRRL race we might have had a clean sweep!

Finally, spare a thought for the young lad who went after Fish for the first lap of the field. Dressed more for a night out in baggy trousers and baseball cap, he was already gasping when I passed him at less than a mile gone. He did eventually finish though not, I gather, before taking heed of the starter's wise words to "stop for a lie down if you feel hot at any time".

With the thermometer in the car showing 26C by midday, I think choosing this over a trip to Eccup, probably only to find that the race was full anyway, was the right choice. Certainly well worth trying this one, not a fast track, but the variations on obstacles and surfaces are endless. If anyone ever invents "trail race" bingo, this will be the race to come to to fill your card!

Finishing order was, I think, Graham (10th?), Mark (12th?) – who ran very strongly in something of a bubble throughout, me 15th, Neil, Pete S, Pete B, Ed and Iain. Fish won, showing absolutely no after effects of Friday's trot around Swinsty; then again, he chose not to take the Sun Inn variant that night. Ron Hill was also present, and running. That would be a good one for the bingo card.

Dave Jepson