

Gibside Fruit Bowl 7 - 1st November 2009

I had known as early as Wednesday, after checking the 5 day forecast, that the weather for Sun 1st was going to be for heavy rain. But, ever the optimist, I hoped the forecasters had got it wrong! The weather was so gloriously perfect on Saturday that it was hard to believe it could possibly change so much over night. However, change it did! Sunday dawned grey, bleak, and with the predicted heavy rain.

I have done the Gibside three times before; the setting is wonderful, particularly at this time of year with the autumnal colours on full display and there is really good pre and post race atmosphere with people chatting and warming up along the 'Long Walk'. This year, however, was a very different story. Claire, Linda and I (Lelia planned to run but was ill) could hardly bear to get out of the car never mind go for a warm up. Eventually, as it got nearer to the start time of 10 o'clock and with our bladders near to bursting we made a dash to the loos and then on to the start line. We were soaked before we even started!

The route, as the t-shirts say is 'not flat'. Luckily though it begins with a nice flat section along the Long Walk, doubling back at the end and then following the road back down towards the entrance. You then begin the first of many climbs, up through the wood towards the top of the estate. Usually from this point you have a wonderful view but this year, for some reason, I didn't notice it! There is then a brief respite as you run back down through the wood and then begins a series of ups and downs before the descent to the the river.

The wind hadn't been a feature of the race up until this point but as we snaked along the river there was an unwelcome head wind to contend with. Reaching the turn up into the wood was a double edged sword; out of the wind and rain to some extent but a relentless climb which seemed to go on forever. I must admit to walking for some of this climb but my fast walking pace was equal to the slow running of those along side me and so I didn't fall behind too much.

The route is signed with good old fashioned mile markers (far better than kilometres!) and how delighted was I when I realised I hadn't seen the 5 mile marker and suddenly the next one was the 6 miler; not far to go now!

In the distance I thought I spotted Claire in her Striders vest and I slowly caught up with her for the last push along the Long Walk and the finishing line. We finished at exactly the same time of 59:15 (198th out of 382) and we were both really pleased to complete the race in under an hour.

We were so totally soaked that, although we would have liked to have stayed at the finish to cheer in Linda and David, all we wanted to do was collect our goody bags and get changed.

Linda arrived back at the car having done it in around 65 mins and I was delighted (and pleasantly surprised!) to see her smiling and hear her say that it hadn't been as bad as expected and that she'd enjoyed parts of it!

Roll on next year with, hopefully, a bigger turnout from the Striders because, rest assured, the weather can't possibly be any worse...or is that just tempting fate?

Kim Taylor