

Raby Castle 10k - 30th May 2010

One of the best things about this race is the 11.15 starting time, it gives you plenty of time to get there and some extra time in bed!

Going through Tow Law on the A68 I noticed how windy it was and hoped that, as its high up, it might be calmer in the lower reaches of Staindrop. No such luck, sadly, as it was just as blowy when I got out of the car in the grounds of the castle.

It's a 15 minute walk from the parking area to the start, giving ample time to suss out the direction of the wind and to realise that it was going to be blowing straight into our faces on the big hill.

The 5k "fun" run had already started by the time I got to the castle so I waited to watch the winner coming in. The winner was a lad of about 16, from Steve Cram's old club at Jarrow, and won in not much more than 15 minutes!

I met a couple of friends from Elvet Striders and chatted before getting changed for the race. About ten minutes before the start the heavens opened but thankfully it only lasted for a few minutes!

The race started in bright sunshine and the first hill, although windy wasn't too bad as there were plenty of runners to hide behind! At the top of the hill the route winds round to a relatively steep descent followed by a small steep hill then through a farm yard.

By the time I got to the top of the descent the front runners were already past the second hill and appeared to be being chased by cows! When I got round there the cows had actually run into the corner of their field (as if they'd be anywhere else!) but keenly watching the runners pass.

This is the fastest part of the course as it's a gradual descent into a small wood. It's undulating through the wood on a trail and you emerge to a steep path curling back towards the castle. I always find this the hardest part of the course and this was no exception as the wind hit us again.

After passing the ponds another short climb brings you round to the castle and a sharp left turn back towards the first hill. There's a welcome water station at about half way then you're off up the hill again. I found the fourth mile a bit tough but recovered on the downhill and felt good going into the finish and a time of 52.44. Not exactly the quickest but my best 10k time of the year and some progress after the hamstring problems.

I've done this 3 times now and it's become one of my favourite races. It's not an easy course but it's such a scenic race that I'd recommend it to anyone.

David Reed