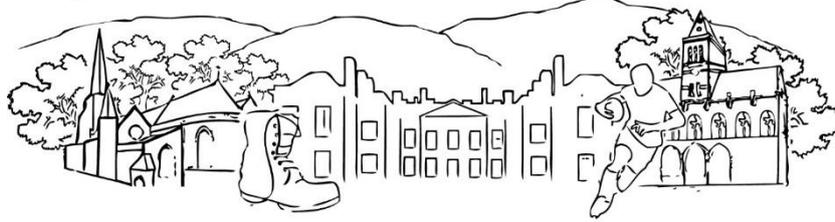




WOLLASTON

Northampton Half Marathon



3rd September 2017

Now in its 5th year, the Northampton Half Marathon continues to grow in popularity and for 2017 we had a great field of runners turn out for what was to be an exciting and in many cases, a momentous event.

To add to the atmosphere at the start, Wollaston BMW provided a BMW i8 to lead runners around the town centre loop and as you can imagine, it attracted much attention by both runners and supporters alike!



In its relatively short 13.1 miles, the course takes runners to areas of the town which are significant in terms of its past, present and future – as well as a tribute to the Northampton Park Run by taking in part of its course on the town's old race course site.



Starting by the splendour of the Guildhall, runners follow the town centre loop for a visit to the racecourse before heading back towards the town centre, taking in one of the towns oldest churches and the law courts before running through the centre of the main shopping area, returning to Guildhall.

The course then passes the shoe museum recognising its manufacturing past, the Derngate Theatre and onto the river where runners experienced the newly constructed path, taking them past the site of the new University of Northampton campus.

Runners then head out to Brackmills, home to pneumatic brands such as Barclaycard and British Pepper & Spice Company before taking in the country roads into Great Houghton, proving that village life still thrives close to the town centre.

The finish is at Delapre Abbey, another link to the past but also providing a great finish for the runners and space for athletes to recover, collect their bags, grab a massage and chill with family and friends. We hope also that the routing of the race provides real variety in the sights and sounds around the course.

And so, to the race. The weather was kind in that the rain held off for the race and all in all it was pretty good running conditions. As usual some fast times were produced and the race culminated in a battle for first place. In the end it was between first and second place. Peter Tucker lead the runners in with a time of 1:12:44, just 6 seconds ahead of Phil Melling. Chris Biddle took third place on the podium with a time of 1:14:32. Both Peter and Phil took first place in their age categories and Chris took 2nd place behind Peter.



Top 3 men – Peter Tucker (centre), Phil Melling (left of picture) and Chris Biddle (right of picture)



In the ladies' race, Kirstie Sharmon well and truly staked her claim for first lady in a time of 1:25:22 ahead of Michelle Buckle who crossed the finish line in 1:29:13. Not far behind Michelle was Lindsay Dixon who took third lady in 1:29:57. The top three ladies also took first, second and third in the F40-44 age category.

Top 3 ladies – Kirstie Sharmon (centre), Michelle Buckle (left of picture) and Lindsay Dixon (right of picture)

We also saw some impressive times in the other male and female age group categories that have not yet been mentioned. Some that deserve a special shout out in the Male age categories are Geoff Newton took first in his age category of M70-74 in a time of 1:38:17 and John Gardner who crossed the finish line in 1:40:57 to take the M75-79 first place. Also to Larry Corkery in who completed the course in 2:11:23 in the M80+ age category. For the ladies, Angela Copson took the F70+ age category in a fantastic time of 1:40:44 and Nora Hoggart finished first in the F60-64 with a time of 1:44:00. Catherine Ulliott also posted an impressive time of 1:34:52 in the F50-54.



The event, which is fundamentally grounded in charity has now also attracted a wide base of charity partners and these include MacMillan, Cynthia Spencer Hospice, Hope Centre, KidsAid, the Air Ambulance and Headway to name a few. As well as individual fundraisers with their own stories to tell, we had many charity teams taking part in the race and their enthusiasm held no bounds. We must take our hats off to the MND team who pushed two competitors around in wheelchairs and still made good time across the finish line! There was also large contingent of runners from sponsors Wollaston BMW who were raising funds for the children's cancer charity NCTLC.



We also must thank the charities MacMillan and Cynthia Spencer who volunteer to man the drinks station's every year and provide amazing support to the runners. Also thanks to Central Vineyard who dished out jelly beans and bucket loads of support for the runners as they passed.



This year, as well as the usual fancy dress costumes, we had something a bit special for 2017, courtesy of Robin Todd. Robin chose the Northampton Half Marathon for his attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the Fastest Half Marathon Dressed as a Plant! To succeed, Robin had to produce a sub-1:30 which isn't easy when you are dressed as a Sunflower. We are pleased to say that Robin recorded a time of 1:29:54 and has also raised vital funds for the Sierra Leone Red Cross.

Finally, a huge thank you to all the volunteers who turned out to support the event either manning registration, on course marshals, lead and tail bikes and the finish crew. Universally, runners mentioned how supportive they were all around the course adding generally to the friendly atmosphere. Also we are very grateful for the support we have received from **Connor Ratcliff at the Running Shop** in Northampton – by far still the best place in down to get a great deal and expert advice

Hopefully the participation and charity fundraising will continue to grow in 2018.

Steve Adams

RD, Northampton Half Marathon