

The Bluebell 10.

Having posted only pw's in all my favourite races this year I decided to take a new tack – only enter races that I haven't done before, therefore guaranteeing me a course pb at worst! It was to this end that I entered the Bluebell 10, having been spurred on by Richard Midgeley's ravings about this race over the past few years.

A few texts later there was almost a car-full of Harriers and the decision was made. The Bluebell 10 sounds a picturesque race and conjures up visions of, well, bluebells. It was in Halifax, so a few hills were to be expected, and the prospect of a river crossing at the end led to a sense of intrigue.

Keith, Nigel and I arrived, quite excited, as we all had something to aim for. We all had a course pb to go at, and Nigel had the prospect of posting a first Harrier home. We jogged to the start only to see Jamie Hutchinson – that was Nigel done for.

Still, friendly banter at the start revealed that there were a couple of killer hills to be expected, the first being at 4 miles, but the view at the top made it all worthwhile (apparently). We set off, headed into woodland, and meandered quite gently along a single track with numerous bottlenecks, at a pace that suited Keith and I quite nicely thank-you. It was at this point that it dawned on me that if this wasn't actually a hill, then the 'hill' must be really bad.

We headed out of the woods, to be confronted by what can only be described as a cobbled rock-face. Anybody who lived here truly justified owning a 4x4 with ice tyres. Having agreed to run together, I did my bit by encouraging Keith up said hill, even resorting to pushing him up at several points. My gallantry was well and truly repaid as having breached the horizon he disappeared into the distance, his downhill technique being superior to mine.

Another hill made sure that I caught up, but not before befriending a Stainland Lion (hosts of the race) whom I had quizzed en-route about the prospect of more hills. No more he said, but he lied, and later admitted that he had no more idea of where he was going than I did!

The view from the top was spectacular, if looking down on Halifax over a complete precipice is your thing – I actually found it a bit disconcerting, anyone who suffers from vertigo beware.

The turn at 5 miles was a relief, and it has to be said that this is one of the most satisfying run-ins of any race I have done, almost exclusively downhill, and the bluebells appeared, as promised, to accompany you through the last two miles of fantastic springy path running – fairly reminiscent of running through our bluebell woods before they re-did all the paths.

But just when we thought it was all over the river crossing loomed. But it was fine – for those over dwarf-height. Thankfully there was a guide rope, and a crowd watching which tamed my language! Keith and I crossed together, but I made sure that gallantry was repaid in the final placings!

Despite the huge and most horrible hill in the middle, which I can't imagine even the most hardened fell-runner making it up uninterrupted, this was a fantastic race. It was twisting and turning, had

everything in it – woods, road, canal, ups, downs, views, even signs saying 'slippy', which was frankly stating the obvious but made me laugh, and was extremely well organised and marshalled.

But my over-riding memory of this race was the friendliness. Never in a race have I had such a laugh, maybe I should try harder.....Oh and just for the record, Jamie was awesome (we think) – he was changed and gone before we got back, Nigel did 1h 33 and Keith and I did 1h 41ish, but I was 1sec ahead of him!