

Sunday saw the running of one of Congleton's yearly signature races: the 33<sup>rd</sup> outing of the Cloud 9 Fell race organised by Congleton Harriers. This is a well organised, popular race which is always over-subscribed. As its name implies it is nine miles in length and takes the runners from its start on the Biddulph Valley Way on a gruelling 1250' ascent up to the top of the Cloud, around the woods, over to Bridestones before wending back down to the finish back on Biddulph Valley Way. Being an early March race, the weather is always a factor and this year the succession of storms meant the course was saturated and exceedingly muddy. At one point the runners had to negotiate what had effectively become a pond around one of the kissing gates; the only option available to the competitors was the wade through the middle. On the day itself the weather itself was kind with bright sunshine albeit with a bit of a chill in the air. Fortunately for the runners the race centre was in the leisure centre which afforded the runners the chance to shower and warm up after the event.

The club, aided by a few other friends from the wider running community, put a lot of effort into making this a friendly, well marshalled event with somewhere between 40-50 volunteers helping out. It certainly means the runners are given plenty of encouragement whilst they run and is one reason why so many keep returning year after year to take part with comments such as "My first Cloud 9 race, definitely won't be my last. Really well organised and thank you to the marshals they were amazing, really friendly and encouraging".

The race was won by Simon Bailey (Mercia Fell Runners) in a time of 57:43, followed by Lawrence Eccles (Penny Lane Striders) in 1:01:04, Jason Brunnock (Buxton AC) in 1:01:34, Arran McCloskey in 1:02:17 and Julian Goodwin (Boalloy) in 1:02:20. For the women, the first five were: Kate Davies in 1:11:55, Carla Brown in 1:13:43, Jayne Dickens (Trentham RC) in 1:16:04, Amy Grace (South Cheshire Harriers) in 1:17:56 and Dominique Searle (Vale Royal AC) in 1:18:21.



Simon Bailey

Photo: Bryan Dale



Julian Goodwin      Photo: Bryan Dale



Kate Davies      Photo: Bryan Dale

There were four Congleton Harriers amongst the 268 who made it to the start line. Charmaine Wood finished 69<sup>th</sup> in 1:19:14, James Pearce was 83<sup>rd</sup> in 1:21:12, Elizabeth Lingford was 108<sup>th</sup> in 1:24:40 and Stephen Sibbald, in his first race as a Harrier, was 170<sup>th</sup> in 1:34:13. Wood and Lingford were 2<sup>nd</sup> in their respective age categories.



Char Wood      Photo: Bryan Dale

The other reason this is such a popular race is the free soup and roll after the event for the runners coupled with the well-stocked charity cake stall which in itself is a reason in itself why runners enter the race (“..and the cake too. Back for my fourth time next year.”). This year’s efforts from the volunteer bakers helped raise £375 which will be split between Congleton Food Bank, Astbury Mere Trust and East Cheshire Hospice.

Elsewhere there were three Harriers racing on Anglesey in a race that, again due to weather conditions, made the national news. The day before the race a tree came down crushing a passing car. Fortunately, all the occupants were unharmed but it did mean part of the route was blocked. A quick bit of re-routing by the race organisers meant the race could still go ahead, however it did turn the half marathon into a 13.8 run. Out of the 1198 runners Paul Crean finished 436<sup>th</sup> in 2:04:14, Suzie Roscoe was 509<sup>th</sup> in 2:07:45 and Rachel Flentje was 1145<sup>th</sup> in 3:02:20.

The club is always keen to see new members whether you are a speedy racer (on or off-road) or more of a social runner. So, if you are thinking of thinking of joining then just come along to one of the regular/ club runs for a few weeks and try us out for size; you will be made to feel more than welcome with no obligation to join. Regular club runs are held on Monday and Tuesday with speed training runs on a Thursday. Mondays are especially good for runners wanting to try the club out for size and is proving to be very popular.

You can find full details on our Congleton Harriers website: [Congleton-harriers.co.uk](http://Congleton-harriers.co.uk). You can also connect with the club on Facebook where details of club activities are posted regularly.