

Congleton Harriers have hosted and organised the Cloud 9 hill race for over 30 years and in its history only once has it been cancelled and that was due to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Earlier in the week, there was many people thinking it could become two cancellations with the Beast from East doing its level best to disrupt one of the most popular and loved fell races in the North West. Daily recces of the route to assess conditions and possible re-routing, multiple conversations with race committee members to discuss options and near obsessive checking of weather forecasts all adding to the stress of putting on a race. With 48 hours to go many entrants from further afield had regrettably taken the decision to withdraw but with an improving forecast and temperatures set to be above freezing on race day and one final run of the course on Saturday the decision was made that it was safe enough to not only for the runners but safe enough for all the volunteer marshals to be out on the course directing and encouraging.

Come 11am, over 200 runners made their way from race HQ at Congleton leisure centre to the start line along the Biddulph Valley Way. With over sixty running clubs represented the race has long held appeal beyond the local area not only because of the challenging but scenic nine-mile route up and over the Bosley Cloud and round by the ancient Bridestones but because of the friendliness of the many marshals that line the course that ensure nobody gets lost and any injured runners are properly looked after. Post-race, runners enjoy hot soup and tea/coffee as well as the finest selection of homemade cakes back in the relative warmth of the sports hall.

In the race itself, Carl Moulton of Boalloy hasn't been off the podium in five years and he made it three wins on Sunday with a time of 58:31, Jason Burgess improved on his fifth place from last year, the Trentham runner took second spot in 59:46 and Jack Ross from Staffordshire Moorlands was third in 60:48. Harriet Pickup made it a double for Boalloy as she was the first woman home improving on her third place from last year, a popular winner, she crossed the line to loud cheers in a time of 74:08 a minute in front of South Cheshire Harrier, Amy Grace who bettered her 6<sup>th</sup> place finish from last year in a time of 75:10 and third was Kathleen O'Donnell of Macclesfield Harriers in 76:05.



*Race winner Carl Moulton*

*photo Bryan Dale*



*Fastest woman – Harriet Pickup*

*photo Bryan Dale*

Race director Nigel Poole presided over prize giving duties and on behalf of himself and the club would like to thank all the people that made the race the success it was from club mates that performed a variety and often multiple roles and they extend their thanks in recognition of the support received from the Congleton leisure centre, Chase Medics and all the race sponsors and to the National Trust.

Although many Congleton Harriers were actively involved in supporting the race, there was still yellow vests on display at two races over the weekend. Owen Burdett was at the inaugural Chester 10k, a fast course finishing outside the medieval Cathedral, Burdett smashed his personal best by over four minutes to finish 245<sup>th</sup> in a time of 47.22. Over the Welsh border, Suzie Kelly was in Anglesey for what the organisers describe as the UK's most beautiful half marathon, the result was certainly pleasing to the eye with a huge personal best to finish 450<sup>th</sup> in 1:55:20.

Congleton Harriers run three times a week from the leisure centre and always welcomes new members for more details visit [congleton-harriers.co.uk](http://congleton-harriers.co.uk)