

This weekend four Congleton Harriers made the long trek over to Pontefract Racecourse in Yorkshire to participate in the Northern Cross-Country Championships. The form of the four going into the event was good, despite a couple of the team being slightly handicapped by recent injuries, and it was odds on that they were going to have an enjoyable race over the 7.5 mile race.

Weather conditions were kind, with moderate temperatures, a light breeze and with the rain kindly holding off until after the event. On inspection the Harriers concluded that the condition of the course for the men's race was also ideal - best described as good to firm.

The four: Bryan Lomas, Stuart Rider, Nick Budd and Rob Parkin, after a suitable pre-race warm up, were soon under starters orders for the 3.05 start. The Northern Championships attracts a high-quality field of athletes and 704 runners arranged themselves in pens across a start line measuring several hundred meters. There was just time for some inter-Cheshire club banter between the Congleton Harriers and the Macclesfield Harriers who found themselves allocated to the same pen at one end of the starting line.

At exactly 3.05 the starting steward fired his gun; sports watches were started, and the runners were galloping off on the first lap of three of the gently undulating course. As this was a high-quality championship race, the Harriers were never going to be amongst the front runners, however, they were never off the pace. There was no need for a photo finish to separate the Harriers: Lomas was the first into the backstretch to cross the finish line in 49:24 taking 344<sup>th</sup> place followed by Rider in 53:01 for 475<sup>th</sup> place, then Budd in 58:44 for 610<sup>th</sup> place and finally Parkin in 69:04 for 690<sup>th</sup> place. There was just time after the race to parade around the paddock before folding the tent and starting the long journey back along the M62.



*Stuart Rider*

*Photo Jon Paul Kearns*



*Rider, Parkin, Budd, Lomas*

*Photo Lucy Rusbridge*

There were no other races this weekend for the Harriers, but preparations for the Cloud Nine Fell race stepped up with the first of two recce runs to check the course and enable volunteer marshals to familiarise themselves with the route. Cloud Nine is one of the three popular races hosted by the Harriers each year and is scheduled to take place on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> March. The recce run was turned into one of the regular social runs open to Harriers and friends. Clearly a popular choice for the social run as it accordingly attracted around 20 runners from a variety of clubs for a canter round the Cloud Nine route.



*Social recce run - top of the cloud*

*Photo Phil Dawson*

The club welcomes new members with club training runs on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. If you are thinking of joining but are unsure of your pace and ability to keep up, then consider the Monday run which are now being tailored to accommodate new prospective members. 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.