

The first Sunday in October is clearly a good day to hold an endurance event as London chose to move it's marathon to the same day as it's more illustrious partner: the Congleton Half. After missing out in 2020 the Congleton Half returned for it's 37th outing on 3rd October. The new race director, Stephen Canning, and the race committee had used the enforced Covid break to good effect by remodelling the starting arrangements with a move from Blackfriers Lane up onto the new road at the end of Back Lane.

The weather conditions for the runners and marshals was perfect – cool and overcast with just a hint of a bit of rain (which thankfully held off bar a few spitting episodes). The race was started promptly at 9.30 by Congleton Mayor, Denis Murphey, with 290 runners setting off behind the lead car (Blue Bell BMW), on their half marathon journey around the local villages and hamlets of Somerford Booths, Marton, Lower Withington, Kermincham and Swettenham. Out front, after the first few miles, the runners quickly became stretched out with the first three running their own individual races for the whole duration.

The first three men to complete the route were Stuart Doyle from Vale Royal in 1.18.10, Paul Sidwells from Run Free in 1.19.51 and Thomas Minshall from Congleton's Boalloy in 1.21.45.



Stuart Doyle, Vale Royal

Photo: Bryan Dale

The first three females were Diane McVey from Wilmslow RC, 7th overall in 1.25.18, Sarah Cleal from Bramhall Runners, 21st overall in 1.32.48 and Sharon Johnstone from Wilmslow RC, 24th overall in 1.34.40.



Diane McVey, Wilmslow RC

Photo: Bryan Dale

This year there were six Harriers who participated in the Half: Ian Stanway was 39th in 1.38.55, Hannah Harding was 71st in 1.44.8, Janine Hulmes was 117th in 1.51.18, Tracy Welch was 141st in 1.55.20, Jackie Moss was 248th in 2.20.08 and Matt Plummer was 288th in 2.41.27. Special mention has to go to Matt who was also running in a virtual marathon so ran the course and a bit more twice!



Hannah Harding, Congleton Harriers

Photo: Bryan Dale

This year, due to Covid there was also on offer a “virtual” Congleton Half Marathon with 14 runners taking up the challenge by running elsewhere over the weekend (at least one was at the London Marathon. The 1st three female runners were Amanda Kelly (Stoke Fit) in 1.37.40, Carey Dyer in 1.53.03 and Fiona Ratic (Trentham RC) in 2.08.00. The 1st three male runners were Graham Cooper (Congleton Harriers) in 2.00.18, Ste Owen in 2.04.03 and James Tutton in 2.09.46.

Full results can be found at www.congletonhalfmarathon.co.uk.

At the event, was long-standing local race photographer Bryan Dale and his photos can be found at www.racephotos.org.uk.

The Congleton Half is also used as means to raise funds for local charities chosen by the Harrier's club members. This year's charities were the East Cheshire Hospice, Ruby's Fund (an inclusive sensory centre and social café for children and young people with additional needs and disabilities, and their families, carers and friends) and the local Food Bank. The exact amount raised is still being totted up and will be posted on the club's website.

The race can only take place because of the hard work of the race committee with a lot of preparation required to sort out road closures, licences etc, all made more complicated this year by the uncertainties of Covid and the new starting arrangements. So special thanks to go to the committee for all their efforts. The other critical factor is having sufficient marshals to man each junction to ensure the race is run safely and to ensure no runner takes a wrong turn. Over 60 marshals participated on the day helping make sure it was a success, so thanks to everyone who gave up their time and helped out. One of the nicest pieces of feedback we get from runners is how supportive every single marshal is to all the competitors, clapping and cheering each and everyone. It's one of the reasons the Congleton Half is unique and why many runners come back each year to test themselves on the undulating course. The feedback this year from the runners contained nothing but praise and the new starting arrangements were well received.

The final thankyou goes to all the runners who took part, without which there would be no race. We look forward to hosting you all again at the 38th edition of the race in 2022.