

The Searlaid Tywang memorial Road Run

I knew nothing about this event, other than it was in Castlecomer, when it was suggested by running mate Mick O'Connor, so this one goes down as a spur of the moment registration. That might seem a little haphazard but my "spontaneity is a meticulously prepared art" (a quote borrowed from Oscar Wilde btw!!). All I mean is; I need to be doing long training runs every other week to meet summer goals, so a relatively local event like this allows me to do that, under event conditions & hopefully with some ATC/YPOM pals for company.

The event itself is only in its 2nd year so route info was sparse. No problem to Club Director of Cartography Seamus Rowan, who quickly sourced a 2016 event map photo & derived an elevation chart in Strava. What he produced was a scary looking chart worthy of a rollercoaster ride poster. 185m of elevation over 21.1k, by comparison, that's approximately the same as the Dublin City Marathon! Yep I should have thought this through.



On the day, there were 3 distances to choose from (10k, 10 mile & Half Marathon) & ATC/YPOM had 4 members lining up for the half marathon challenge, Myself, Mick O'Connor, Seamus (listed as JAMES) Rowan & Sinead Foley. The sun did it's best to defy the weather forecasters so registration (at Dean Celtic FC grounds) & pre-race banter was done whilst basking in the mid-morning sun. There is a very emotional story as a backdrop to this event and you can definitely sense that participants are emotionally invested in it – runners displaying memorial t-shirts, wearing ribbons & running in fund raising groups. Participant numbers for the half marathon distance were low (in comparison to other events I've done) with 87 starters listed (there were approx. the same number doing the 10miler & 150 runners doing the 10k). It made for good crowds at the start but as the half marathon pack spread out it became a lonely enough run.

As for the route, a pre-race warm up is absolutely essential here given you start climbing after 500 metres. The route goes straight out from Deans Celtic FC grounds and up the Castlecomer road for 3k (70m of elevation), then a flat country roads section & steep decline to the 5k marker which completes a loop back to the town. Then you head through the town and straight out the N78 & back to climbing (yippee!) to the 8k post (a 3k sections with 50m of elevation). It gets flattish thereafter to the half way point. The 2nd half, bar a few sneaky short climbs, is largely a soft downward sloping route. Most notable features being the climbs obviously but also the long straight sections. I find it hard to tackle those sections where you are just staring into the distance, watching runners ahead of you making it look much easier!!!

While the route is on open roads it is well marshalled so no real traffic issues and there are water stations every 5k or so. Only water available mind, which was a bit disappointing, considering the post-race refreshments were excellent (the odd cup of coke/sports drink at the

stations on the 2nd half of the course would have been very welcome). There is a nice mix of country & main roads, green landscape and townlands (passing through Glenmullen, Moneenroe, Cloneen, Deerpark) and while there is not a huge turn out by supporters (akin to the Gingerbread Run) you do get some residents out cheering you on which is always nice & very much appreciated.

Because of the course design & for those with a mind for pacing, this is definitely a “negative split” race. I ran the 1st half completely on heart rate, basically trying not to blow a gasket or tear a tendon on the hill climbs. The hills are tough on the lungs, legs & head and I saw plenty of participants walking, particularly on a nasty section leaving Castlecomer as you pass the Discovery park (I must bring the kids there soon!). The second half is much more forgiving and I found myself switching back to running on pace and making up time as the race went on. They throw in a very unwelcome 1km climb at 19k, it’s only an 18m increase in elevation but it feels like you are plodding up Mt Leinster at that stage, before the final km which is a very steep downhill, sharp left turn and flat sprint finish.

There is a great atmosphere at the finish line, as I mentioned earlier it’s a very emotionally driven event and there are lots of congratulations & celebrations, cakes and buns (lots of cakes and buns!) and other refreshments.

All in all, this is a tough but very enjoyable event. Made all the better by it’s convenient location, usual great company & some pleasing finishing times. Mark your calendars for 2018.



| Position | Name | Club | Gender | Gender Position | AG | AGpos | Bib | Gun time | Chip time |
|----------|----------------|---------------------|--------|-----------------|---------------|-------|------|------------|------------|
| 18 | michael connor | St abbans | m | 16 | Senior Male | 8 | 5218 | 1:39:48,99 | 1:39:47,14 |
| 20 | Eamonn McEntee | Athy Triathlon Club | m | 17 | Male 40 | 9 | 5262 | 1:42:32,16 | 1:42:29,50 |
| 43 | James Rowan | Athy tri club | m | 32 | Male 40 | 18 | 1392 | 1:52:58,07 | 1:52:52,97 |
| 44 | Sinead Foley | | f | 12 | Senior Female | 7 | 5238 | 1:53:03,30 | 1:52:58,70 |