

The Viking Chase – Four Peaks

7.8 miles – 1800 feet ascent

23 September 2012

Having enjoyed last years series, it was with great expectation that I travelled to the North Yorkshire Moors for the first of the Esk Valley Fell Club/Northern Runner - Winter Series 2012/13: The Viking Chase – Four Peaks.

You would have thought that such anticipation would have culminated in a great amount of planning for the big day, but sadly no. I packed my stuff and jumped into the car with my route map carefully folded and unread in my bumbag. I headed off to the North York. Moors comfortable in the knowledge that I had been to the allotted car park previously...

Unfortunately, I was seriously mistaken and a quick look at the road map on the Whitby road confirmed that I had missed the turn-off 8 miles earlier. The North York. Moors are hard enough to get to from Newcastle at the best of times but now I knew I would struggle to get there by the start. As it happens I did make it with 5 minutes to spare but with only enough time to register, get my kit on and run to the start, which to make matters worse was positioned half a mile away.

We were off! I caught a brief glimpse of another NFR runner(Dave Atkinson) from the back, but that was all so I think there were only two of us. I suspect many NFR runners were 'saving themselves' for the Kielder Blast next weekend, but as I am planning to be at a wedding it was not a concern of mine.

The start is actually on the first hill and the path winds up to the top of Carlton Bank in a very runnable fashion – in fact, its one of the few hills that I have ever run up without stopping. I was so worried about this that I spent the entire descent of the Bank concerned that I had gone off too fast and would 'burn-up' on the next hill.

You are no sooner at the bottom of the first hill than you start ascending Cringle Moor. This is a steeper path especially at the top, where I had to revert to type and ended up walking but in a purposeful fell-running style! This was followed by a bit of a cool airy trot along the top with spectacular views of the plain towards Middlesbrough before a descent to the next hill: Cold Moor.

Cold Moor is short and sweet - straight up and down – with little to say about it. From then it was up Clay Bank, along the top and down a steep path to the woods below. For those of you who may have done this before, the descent via the scree slope was forbidden!

At the halfway point there was an unexpected water station and free haribo's! I'm not a great fan of eating solid sweets while running, and couldn't enjoy them for constantly hoping the runner behind me knew the Heimlich Maneuver...

From then on it was a pretty straight gradually upward muddy path, that undulating and hugged the base of the last three hills ascended and went through some pleasant mixed woodland. This path seemed to last forever and having not done this route before I found it difficult to judge my pace. I let three runners past on the latter part of this section, as I was trying to conserve some energy for the unknown miles to come. However, not long after that we turned a corner and started descending to the registration tent (and finish) that I could see in the distance. I was

unable to make up ground on the three that passed me, but did overtake one runner in the last 50 metres much to his disappointment, and my joy!

More water at end...and chocolate!

The course was well marked. Not a red tape in sight, but lots of red coats – a scary scenario for a Scot in England! Members of the Cleveland Search and Rescue Team marked out the entire course, sporting rather snazzy red cagoules emblazoned with their logo. They are clearly not an endangered species! I made a note to myself that if I was going to get lost in the future then I should try and make sure it is in Cleveland.

To be fair, the event was run to raise funds for the Cleveland Search and Rescue Team - a very worthy cause.

In summary, a series of four hills up and down followed by an undulating 'flattish' path to the finish...all run in glorious Autumn weather.

Another great Dave Parry and Associates Production.

For the results see the Esk Valley Fell Runners site.

Neil Gammack NFR

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