

**Haworth Hobble**  
**12<sup>th</sup> March 2016**  
**32 miles**

Ideal conditions really for trotting around the trails and tracks of the Pennines. Gloves on and off, but temperature not fluctuating much in the light breeze. So now familiar routine of park up on the all-weather school pitch – raising £500+ for the school which is great – then ascend the steps to registration. Smoothly through then join the toilet queue. Back down the steps to the car for last minute adjustments, attempt to warm the legs up and then join the throng at the start on the cobbles.



*Registration*



RO Brett made a brief address pointing out that the finish route was to descend the cobbles and then up the road to the school. In the past I had taken various routes back to the school, with cobbles the first few times then direct on the road, then a few times direct after the church down the steps. The cobbles + road is longer so would be interesting to see if people did do this.

This was my first race since September after a bad back and femoral nerve had kept me completely out of any action for a few months so I had not got up to speed or endurance levels just yet. However, the Hobble was a good target to aim for so I was pleased to just be taking part. Arriving back from a week's work trip to India the day before may have left me a little jet lagged – I was going to find out.

Off we went, someone attempted 'Oggy Oggy Oggy', but this is not the London Marathon so on getting no response he had to answer himself with "Oi Oi Oi". I felt OK setting off, legs moving, not overly stiff, not overly quick either and once on the level I'd already lost sight of the leaders. Once off road the dry conditions on the tracks meant for pleasant progress. I passed Andy Robinson so judged my pace was about right. The queue through the first gate was minimal and soon we were ascending to Top Withins with remnants of snow lying around. Not cold though so no ice on the flag stones as we went over the top and then descended to the reservoir.

Along the road Andy Robinson came passed me which gave me someone to follow/chase. To CP1 at the edge of the car park building site, quickly through, round Widdop reservoir where Scott Leach was taking photos, hopefully raising some money for Bloodwise (<https://www.justgiving.com/scottdoestri>). Karen Nash caught up with me and over took, I manage to catch and overtake Andy. CP2 water top up here. The short road section over the Long Causeway was not bleak this year, and even the mud at Stiperden Farm not so bad. Descend down the road, jelly baby at the Italian junction, a brief wee stop – Andy comes past me again then plod along the Calderdale way, skirting round mud pools before the descent to Todmorden. A whole bunch of us doing the intricate navigation and a further bunch behind so quite a few 25 maybe ascending up to Mankinholes. This included the mixed pair of Karen and James (*not sure if this is the right names?*). Some us went slightly wrong in the gloop of the fields – not good, before plodding into CP3. A melee of hands out with water bottles trying to get a refill before calming down into the jog again and along the relative flat of the approach to Stoodley.

A turn off slightly earlier than expected for my bunch gave us a good line up and I was pleased with my ascending. Just near the top a woman's voice was shouting encouragement – at first I thought it was Karen Nash which would have been strange – perhaps the Indian jet lag was setting in – instead just someone encouraging everyone, sharing her supplies of sweets and banana and water. My legs would not stretch out on the gentle down so various overtakes came past including mixed pair Karen and James who seem to be having fun with navigation. James bumped me as he came past and we shared a joke about there being plenty of room and no need to get so close. Louise Burt came past in a good rhythm but not going away too quick. However, the Todmorden women's pair of Melanie Blackhurst and Lucy Hobbs were going well and they were soon out of sight.

So down into Hebden on smooth tarmac. Quads, quads and more quads had already had enough. They were not so bad for ascending through and I was able to jog a bit to Heptonstall, giving up when someone walked past me! I took a drink from a lady who had just offered it to her husband who didn't want it. I did manage one overtake – Louise – only because she took a wrong turn in Hebden. Horse Bridge CP – water top up and soon away. Gradual climb on the "Haworth to Hebden Bridge Walk" as it is marked on the 1:25000. Well I did jog the level bits. Home stretch now. Again came past the mixed pair who had gone wrong again in Heptonstall – still smiling though. Head of the valley and the final CP, no need to refuel so crack on up the steep tarmac – does anyone manage to run this but?

Eventually Leeshaw reservoir comes in site as I am gradually passed by more and more people. Still I manage to jog up the last bit of road where Louise comes past me again. Finally, with a small group I do descend the cobbles of Haworth main street as Brett had requested and back up the road to the school to finish. A slow time for me – 45 mins slower than last year, yet satisfying to go round. There is no fast twitch in my legs just plod and after this race a fair bit of quad damage to get better. Maybe a bit more speed will return as the season goes on, I don't mind too much, it is just good to be out and running.

Drinks and veg pasta are served. Race performances caught up on and then back outside for a final descent down the long concrete staircase to the car park to give the quads one last workout.

Thanks to the Hobble race team.

Nigel Aston