

## East Neuk 10k – September 2018

Having completed the Footers C25k in March of this year (much to the disbelief and overt amusement of my friends and family – I've never been the sporty type!) I found myself on the starting line of the East Neuk 10k six months later. Karen and I travelled through together, along with my husband and three kids for support. My parents met us there to see their daughter actually running for themselves and confirm it wasn't all just rumour!

My husband runs and so I've had experience of races before. This time, though, I wasn't there to hang about and play with the kids for a couple of hours, with a wee snack and a brew to pass the time before heading to the finish line. The knot in my stomach reminded me of this, in addition to the shivering. It was a crisp morning to be fair, but not cold enough for physical shaking!

We arrived in good time and parked in the Waid community campus. Despite the fact it was a hive of activity, registration was quick and we were handed our chips to tie on to our shoes and our race numbers. A swift recce around the hall set the nerves off again. To a novice like me, everyone else looked so professional. People were warming up and stretching, mostly those wearing their club running vests. I had on a long-sleeved top, with my Footers T-shirt over it and was still cold; these people with only vests on were, in my mind, surely the 'proper' runners.

Soon enough we were called to make the short walk down to the start line, which was up a farm road along from the Co-op. Some people – the professionals- ran to warm up, but I was scared that I would peak too soon, so opted for a slow, family amble instead. This gave us time to take in our surroundings, included the cemetery, giving my eldest son the fuel for a quip along the lines of 'You might end up in there Mum.' Such was the level of support and expectation!

The wind had picked up by this time and so it was a breezy wait. A man with no megaphone shouted some instructions, but I couldn't hear anything and then we were off! My foot clunked on the black line and I started Strava on my phone. (Hopefully Santa is bringing me a running watch!) I remember telling Karen I would stick with her for as long as possible. I didn't last long!

The start of the race was quite congested and I was glad not to be so close to people after the first kilometre; I am notoriously clumsy and I was worried I was going to trip or make someone else fall. Mind you, the terrain was far rockier than I'd anticipated and I had to concentrate on my footing anyway up to approximately the third kilometre, when it became road rather than farm track. (I'm not very good at judging distance by the way!)

I'm not used to running alone, but I am also not used to running with a large, sweaty, loudly-grunting man beside me. This was my companion for the whole race, as every time I overtook him, he would all of a sudden whizz by me a few minutes later and then walk. We played this bizarre cat-and-mouse game for the entire route.

The route itself is mostly flat, which was ideal for a first attempt. It's an 'out and in' race; at 5km, just after a water station, you run round cones and head back the same way. Therefore, as I hit approximately the 3km mark, I met the front runners on their way back – not great for morale, but it also meant I passed Karen, which gave me a wee boost, as did the claps and shouts of encouragement from the lovely marshals.

When I signed up for the race, I had in my mind that I just wanted to run it without stopping. However, as the time approached and I'd done some training runs – the quickest being 1.03 – I knew that in order for it to feel like more of an achievement, I wanted to finish in under an hour. By the 7<sup>th</sup> km I was back on the rocky terrain and felt like I was slowing down. With my phone on my arm and

no watch (please Santa!), I had no idea what my pace or the time was. I started chatting to a lovely woman -older than me by a couple of decades -who looked like she was effortlessly gliding along. She made me forget the last couple of kilometres and then as I turned the corner at the ninth kilometre, my son ran towards me and we headed down to the finish line together. I passed my parents, husband and two other kids and ran as fast as my legs allowed when I heard Karen shouting that I was going to do it. She joined me as I crossed the line, incurring a wee row from the marshal who was going to time her again!

Having collected my first race medal and a much-needed bottle of water, I checked my Strava. 59 22. Made it...just! It was immediately clear from the rush of excitement that my inaugural race would not be my one and only. Race cherry well and truly popped! I can't wait for the next one.