

Grantham Cup 10k - 18th April 2010

Be warned, for those of a nervous disposition it contains graphic descriptions of hills!

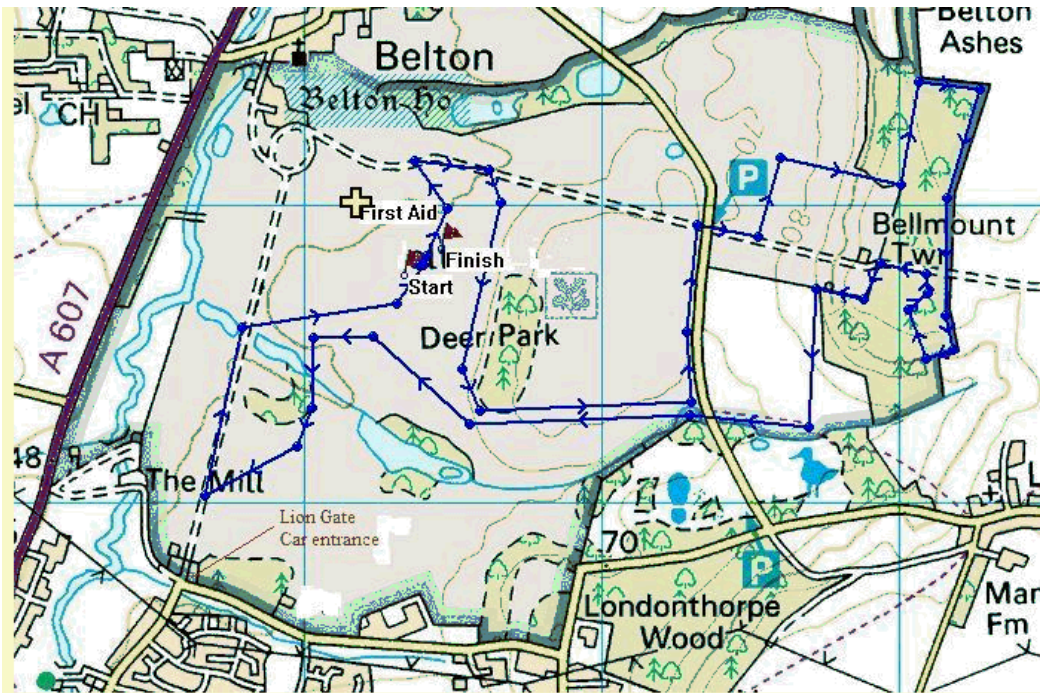
The Grantham Cup 10K is a new race in the calendar set up to coincide with the Horse trials held at Belton Hall 3 miles north of Grantham. The course is a beautiful winding loop around the deer park of the stately home that featured in the BBC's *Pride and Prejudice* drama series and although run under the UKA rules there is little chance of a PB as the surface is a mixture of tracks and rough field turf that has, at best been levelled with a tractor. Except for the steeper bits. . . .

As you would expect from sharing a venue with a larger event, the facilities were great and the organisation was much better than you would expect from a local race. The whole site tannoy system was very informative and we were kept up to date of other activities starting in different areas of the park. As this was the first event of the day there weren't many spectators although the marshals were good and there was an organised water stop at the bell tower at around 6km. The first and last 3 km were mostly flat and we got the option of navigating the water obstacle from the horse cross country course. Otherwise, the runners were kept off the actual horse course to avoid damaging it for the 4 legged athletes later in the day.

The middle section of the race left the main park and was routed through fields and over a couple of stiles and footpaths up to a bell tower built on top of the highest point (200 metres!). This climb was steep enough on the way up to walk using hands and feet without leaning over much more than running! On the way down it was a case of bravery over fitness as the slope was slightly less steep and offered the chance to run at sub 5 min/mile pace as long as you could find safe places for your feet among the rough grass and mole hills. I caught and passed several local club runners including someone from NVH on this stretch who just hadn't experienced real trail running in hilly conditions before.

Overall, I finished 9th out of 116 runners in 42:01. I would recommend the race to anyone next year and to stay and enjoy the rest of the activities.

Ben Evans



The 10km multi-terrain course



The profile: There is 199m of accent and decent