

Hitchin Priory hosts the Hitchin Hard Half Marathon

Rain of biblical proportions didn't stop more than 200 runners testing their fitness in the relaunched Hitchin Hard Half Marathon which was a resounding success. This aptly named race is very highly rated by Runners World as one of the hilliest and hardest of long distance



courses. The 'Hitchin Hard Half' was an annual event until about 10 years ago, but the spirit of the 2012 Olympics spurred the Hitchin Rotary clubs to resurrect the race as part of the 'Go Hitchin!' weekend.

Finding a central point where so many runners could gather in safety for the start and finish was solved when Chartridge Conference Company came to the rescue and offered the extensive parkland of Hitchin Priory free of charge.

Starting at 9.30am, the runners sprinted through the Priory Park and into Gosmore,



closely followed by the rain, which kept them company for the whole race. Cheered by spectators, the runners made their way through Charlton and Preston, returning through Gosmore and back to the finish at Hitchin Priory.

The race was won by Wayne Bell with a time of 1:17:49, and Astrid McKeown taking the honours in the women's

section when she crossed the finish line with a time of 1:30:06. Mark Vaughan was the first veteran finishing in 1:22:06 and Paula Adams was the first woman in the same category with a time of 1:36:13.

“This was the best organised, and hilliest race I've experienced. It's a real challenge that generates a huge high at the finish. Every runner should run this race at least once.” said Martin Winters who ran the Hitchin Hard Half for the first time.

Debbie Hodge, Rotary 1260 District Governor and Maggie Dyer, President of the Rotary Club of Hitchin Tilehouse, presented the winners with trophies and £60 with cash prizes of £50 and £40 for second and third places.

Speaking for Hitchin Tilehouse Rotary, race director Amanda Watkins said: “This event was a success because of a tremendous amount of hard work by so many people especially to members of Hitchin Tilehouse, all the Rotary Clubs of Hitchin and Friends of Rotary and Hitchin Priory. Their efforts have culminated in the re-birth of the Hitchin Hard Half Marathon. It was a fantastic achievement to have so many runners take part and really shows that there is a place for the Hitchin Hard Half Marathon in the future.”



Peter Darnell, Managing Director of Chartridge Conference Company who provided the grounds of Hitchin Priory on the day added, “It's great for the town and the community to have an event like this which attracts competitors from far and wide. Hitchin Priory is the perfect focal point for this event as it meant the athletes avoided the town centre roads so the event didn't disrupt the local community. We look forward to it becoming an annual event when even more runners can put their endurance to the test.”

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The Chartridge Conference Company runs and manages four dedicated conference and meeting venues (Chartridge, Hitchin Priory, Lydiard House and The Beeches) located in the Home Counties and West Midlands. All CCC venues are set in out-of-the-ordinary locations that provide the perfect secluded environment for meetings. All venues provide the highest standards of fully equipped training facilities in rooms that are bright, inviting and adaptable with on-site technical support. Superb food is created with care and flair by dedicated chefs, and when the learning is over, delegates can relax in style in beautiful and peaceful surroundings. The ethos of CCC is to successfully combine total professionalism, excellent value in a friendly relaxing environment. CCC is a member of MIA and Conference Centres of Excellence.

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