

Pre-entries trebled for this year's race – which left us wondering how many people would turn up on the day and worrying about running out of souvenir beer. In the end we got the forecast about right – and we had 166 finishers in the main race and 34 children in the fun runs.

The car parking worked well – the car park team squeezed 100 cars in to the recreation ground, which may well be a record. But we think this is probably our limit – if we have many more runners, we really will have to do something creative with the parking in future.

As the start time approached, most of the runners kept warm in the club house, with only a few warming up in more traditional ways in the cold and the drizzle. We had a minor hitch when we realised that our starter - Debbie the Christmas pudding – couldn't start two stop-watches, blow a whistle and speak at the same time. Still we got going pretty much on time.

As is traditional, Dil Wetherill did the path finding round the first lap and a half, before Tim Harris of Amptill and Flitwick Flyers took over the lead that he'd keep right to the end of the race. As the leaders left the Rec, Mark Simpson of FVS Tri and John Newall of Royston Runners took up 2nd and 3rd places followed by Dil and Adrian Wadsworth of Flitwick Flyers.

Adrian pushed on past the others and reached the top of the hill in 2nd place, ahead of Mark and John. At the 2 mile mark, the first five runners were within 200m of each other, but in the next mile Tim stretched his lead and the gaps between the other leaders opened up too.

In the women's race, Jo Clarke of Victoria Park Harriers and Paula Downing were well ahead of the others, with Jo finishing comfortably in the lead at the end.

Although the weather on the day wasn't as pleasant as last year, there had been much less rain in the weeks before the race and conditions under foot were much better – more sticky than slippery – and certainly faster. This may have contributed to the fast times and the number of course records that were set.

Tim Harris set a new course best time (17:47), and many other course records were set. Josef Rivers who holds the boys under 11 best from last year, did the same for the under 13's this year (24:10), running an amazing 6 minutes faster than last time. Tom Young set a new time for the under 15 boys (23:22). The men's vet classes also saw new bests for over 40 (Dil Wetherill in 19:18), over 50 (Norman Brown in 22:06) and over 60 (Peter Donovan in 31:00). The women's race saw new records in every single age class. Caroline Willis ran brilliantly to finish in 27:21 in the under 11 class – only 6 seconds behind Helen Harbon setting a new best for the under 13s. (Liz' time is also quite a bit faster than the boys under 11 mark and if we had such an award, she'd probably win the best run of the day competition). New bests in the Senior group (Jo Clarke in 22:11), over 35 (Paula Downing in), over 45 (Rachel Lancaster in 26:06) and over 55 (Monica Winston) were also set.

The children's fun runs were taken very seriously by all taking part. In the U11's Mathew Baxter tore round the single 600m lap to come home first, followed home by Dan Young and Joseph Davies. All three finished within 2 minutes – equivalent to running a mile in 5 minutes! The under 11 girls was won by Zoe James in 2:20, with Louise and Rebecca Crombie in 2nd and 3rd. Under 7 Emily Simmons – who dashed over to the start at the last minute from her car parking duties - found herself running with the under 11's by mistake. Not put off by the size of the apparent competition, she set a best time for the girls under 7's of 3:10. Louise Baxter made the same mistake as Emily and finished only just behind.

The under 7's race was a competitive affair, with the first 3 finishing within 20 seconds of one another. Mathew Davies came first in a time of 2:20, followed home by Mike Tonge and Ben Wetherill.

Banks and Taylor had bottled a special beer for the race – and each adult finisher was given a bottle of "Boxing Day Runner". If this wasn't enough, tea and warm mince pies were served too – very welcome after a muddy run in the cold and wet.

A feature unique to the Boxing Day Run is the “Pre-race excuse competition” – the only part of the day where there’s anything to be gained by being any good at anything. We had a bumper amount of entries – which will be posted to the web site – but there were three that stood out from the crowd. In 3rd place was Martyn Annetts with “I’m the Greek Olympic committee member who pressed the wrong button – the 2012 olympics are coming to Pirton, and I’ve been up all night organising it”. 2nd place went to John Stephens with the somewhat surreal “I awoke as a hamster. Took inordinately long time to shave – the budgie next door had borrowed the mirroragain. (Smell of cuttlefish everywhere). Looking forward to running today. Pirton is far prettier than my little wheel”. But first place went to David Sabey with “I am beginning to think that the choice of corduroy underwear may be a mistake.” He wins an hour’s fitness assessment with Phil Turner – so next year he should have no excuse, no matter what his smalls are made of.