Great Naseby Water Race
2019

Steve Tripp's Experience

2019 was the fourth year in a row I've run at the Great Naseby Water Race. I did the 50km which still seems like it needs an 'only' in front of it as it's the shortest event. I love Naseby – the atmosphere of the race, the beauty of the surroundings, the gathering of the people. It's like a big weekend long party.

I arrived mid-afternoon on Friday and after sorting out where to park my car (for sleeping in) I grabbed some running clothes and set out for a jog around the course with a friend. The course hasn't changed in the 4 years I've been around so there's no surprises there but it's always fun meeting up with people doing the 160km or 200km. At that stage they had been only going for a few hours so were mostly still looking fresh and chatting sensibly. Things get different when the sun goes down! Many of them pulled out overnight.

The weather on the Saturday (my race day) was wonderful. A reasonable frost but warm and sunny during the day. I wanted to take it easy for my 50km as it's in the middle of a big training block and I didn't want to get too tired. I strapped on my sandals and trotted around the first lap in 55min. A bit quick for me to be taking it easy so I dialed it back a bit and after that every time I caught one of the longer distance runners I slowed and talked to them for a few minutes.

The course is a 10km long figure eight which makes it's quite possible to lap the long distance runners and get lapped by the speedsters. I was lapped twice by one of the teams and once by Jason Palmer as he set a new course record. The repetition means there's plenty of chance to chat to people on the way. It also means runners pass all the aid stations every 5km and the cheering and support given to all runners by all supporters is a wonderful boost. I couldn't stop smiling as I ran through there every 30 minutes or so.

I had a good 500 m sprint at the end to finish my 50km in 5 hours and 9 minutes. 25 minutes slower than my best but it was steady and not too damaging so I was happy with that.

The weekend finishes with prize-giving on Sunday with spot prizes for everyone and then joining a friend to drive around the course on a quad bike picking up race markers and helping with the pack up. I have huge respect for Jamie and Aileen Sinclair who founded this event and have been running it since it started. I don't think they sleep at all over the Saturday night and don't get to finish until their trailer is packed and carted back to Dunedin on the Sunday. It's a massive undertaking and they really make it work.