



Brooks Paddock Wood Half-Marathon

KENT, APRIL 11



FIRST MAN	WILLIAM LEVETT 1:09:59
FIRST WOMAN	TINA OLDERSHAW 1:20:03
LAST FINISHER	4:22:07
NO. OF FINISHERS	1,945
PB POTENTIAL*	86%
OVERALL RATING*	87%

It's a little-known fact that Paddock Wood was the location of a piece of motoring history. In August 1896, Walter Arnold received the first UK speeding fine for travelling at a mighty eight miles per hour (four times the national speed limit). Fast-forward over 100 years, and it seems fitting, if slightly ironic, that this quaint Kent parish should now play host to one of the quickest half-marathons in the South East racing calendar.

Thankfully, the characterless setting of Eldon Way Industrial Estate - home to the start and finish gantries - belies the pretty route for which the race is famed. Indeed, save for the opening and closing stretches, the course comprised peaceful, tree-lined lanes and looped through a handful of rural villages before returning homeward. Magnificent red-brick oast houses and a string of astonishingly grand properties completed the tableau, while clear, sunny skies added the finishing touch to the near-perfect racing conditions.

Not that those at the front of the field took time to ponder this idyll. With a mere 40 metres of ascent over 13.1 miles (thanks to the occasional bridge), its otherwise pancake-flat contours are an obvious draw for those in search of fast times. Even the downward stretch from the railway crossing in the final 800m seemed placed to perfection - injecting runners with a conclusive burst of pace as they turned back into Eldon Way for the finish.

OAST-ING ALONG
The route promised
PBs aplenty



STATION MASTER
With barely a drop spilled

Frequent water and sponge stations helped runners keep their cool as temperatures began to climb, while a man trapped in stocks at mile seven - at whom discarded sponges were directed with surprising vigour - restored many a smile among the tiring field. Spectator support was unsurprisingly limited en route

(save for a few well-positioned pubs) but the concurrent 2K Joe Cartwright Fun Run proved the perfect distraction for younger family members before they turned their attentions to cheering the finishers as they returned home.

Lengthy toilet queues at the start - which the race director has been quick to address for next year - gave rise to some minor grumbles, but otherwise few could find fault with the efficient organisation. Indeed, with a record turn-out and a string of positive ratings on runnersworld.co.uk, after 21 years this pleasing rural fixture certainly seems to have come of age.

Catherine Lee

Like the sound of this? Try... Chippenham Half-Marathon Wiltshire, September 12

This will be the third running of this fast, mostly traffic-free course along scenic rural roads and finishing in the grounds of Chippenham Sports Club.

Run and rated... Real racers' views on the The Paddock Wood Half-Marathon

**PAUL HONEY, 35,
BRENCHLEY,
1:56:54**

"It's a lovely, flat course - I knocked about 10 minutes off my PB. I started suffering around mile 10 but thankfully my friend caught up with me then, and we ran together to the finish."



**REBECCA FARNALL, 29,
RAYLEIGH, 1:53:50**

"About 20 of us from my club chose this as our last build-up race before the London Marathon. I pushed the pace a bit, more than I had in marathon training, and am really pleased with my time."



**JULIE FOSTER, 50,
MAIDSTONE, 2:12:19**

"It's a nice course - you need the odd little hill. I ran in a group for most of the way - everyone was very friendly, and the marshalls and staff at the water stations were really helpful. I'll probably be back next year."

