

Baker wins Barns Green Half Marathon

James Baker from Chichester Runners won the 29th running of the Barns Green Half Marathon on Sunday. Almost 1500 runners took part in ideal running conditions through the beautiful West Sussex course with Baker winning in a time of 1 hour 10 minutes 30 seconds. This was the 34 year old's 4th win in the race and he finished over a minute and a half ahead of Tim Haughian from Windsor, Slough, Eton and Hounslow AC who recorded a time of 1 hour 12 minutes and 4 seconds. Third place went to local boy Neil Boniface from Horsham Joggers with a time of 1 hour 12 minutes and 46 seconds. Baker took the lead after about 2 miles and gradually pulled away from the field. However, he would not even have been running in the race had he been offered a place as one of the elite runners in the Great South Run which also took place on Sunday. Instead Baker decided to run once again at Barns Green and was delighted with his decision. "I love this race and have finished in the top 10 every year since 2000" he said looking remarkably fresh immediately after the race. "The conditions were ideal and as always the race is very well organised."

In the ladies race, the honours went to Claire Grima from Hercules Wimbledon. She finished in a time of 1 hour 22minutes 45 seconds. Clare ran with her husband, David who crossed the line just in front of her "He always does that" said a delighted Claire after the race. Last year Grima finished 4th but it was only 4 months after giving birth to her first child. This year's longer preparation for the race helped her and she was thrilled with the way things went, "I hit the front after about 3 miles. I really enjoyed the race, it is a lovely course and I particularly like the fact that all the roads are closed and you can just concentrate on your running". Second in the women's event was Fiona Powell from Brighton and Hove City AC who finished the race in 1 hour 24 minutes 39 seconds just 2 seconds in front of Sarah Kingston of Fittleworth Flyers.

The race was particularly significant for one local runner. 58 year old Keith Valentine from Horsham Joggers was competing in his 100th half marathon and completed the race in just 1 hour 28 minutes and 11 seconds finishing 4th in the Veterans Men (55-59) race.