

Hell Up North – 7 Nov 10

The race is multi terrain and is held in Delamere Forest, it was advertised as follows:

The PUMA HellRunner™ is over multi-terrain and varying underfoot conditions. There will be everything from running tracks and trails to water-filled areas and plenty of steep hills. Expect to get very wet! It will be nature at its toughest. The course will be marked but do not expect to see mile or kilometre markers....that's for those softy road running types. All you need to know is that the course will be probably more than 10 and less than 12 miles in length. Hey! With what we have in store, who's counting?

Three (fool) hardy Deestridders took part in this challenging event and after some heavy rain in the days before the race, the first obstacle was the car park; originally on a grass field, this had to be changed at the last minute due to the number of cars getting bogged in. This resulted in a 15 minute delay to the start of the race.

The race started with a long hill climb before a fast decent back through the start. The course then headed into the forest and became a mixture of trails, tracks and bogs. The first bog was very short, but very deep and was followed by some narrow tracks making overtaking extremely difficult. A few cheeky little detours took the runners up some very steep hills which involved some assistance from the upper limbs to drag tired bodies up them. With no idea of distance and disorientated from the many twists and turns, a large number of spectators heralded an obstacle which must be worth watching; this was the 'Bog of Doom' and the course was clearly marked through a river and bog which was tortuously long and waist deep. A short respite in the middle was quickly followed by another plunge into the icy depths before the final run in to the finish.

On leaving the bogs, muscles which had become very cold needed kick starting up a short incline before the final couple of obstacles, the last of which was a 90 degree turn at the bottom of a step descent where many a competitor lost their footing and slid unceremoniously to a muddy halt. The finish line was mere feet away and a final effort saw many a muddy apparition drag themselves over the line.

The club members who took part enjoyed a challenging if somewhat muddy race and was a welcome departure from the usual road races. Martin Witty continued his run of good form, finishing 24th in 1hr 11mins; Paul Hunt was 695th in 1hr 39mins and Emma Cadwallader, in her first ever off road race finished 1645th (271st lady) in 2hrs 19mins.

Anyone wishing to try something different should consider this race and we may even get a team for next year.