

Durisdeer 14 June 2008.
British Championship race
10.5 miles 3800 ft climb

Durisdeer is a small village just north of Dumfries, it's only a few miles from the motorway but by most peoples standards, it's in the middle of nowhere. It seems strangely refreshing to find that the nearest shop is six miles away and it's an idyllic place until you realise that you've run out of milk. Thanks to Pete Booth who responded to the emergency call and picked up some milk on the morning of the race. We weren't running up any mountains without a cup of tea. Unfortunately the nearest pub is next door but one to the nearest shop.

Staying in the start/finish field the night before the race in our Fell captain Garry Wilkinson's camper ensured that we were well rested after the drive north. Its cold in the great outdoors at night isn't it? I felt quite sorry for some of the other campers in the field sleeping in glorified bin bags. Karrimor lads, apparently, 'don't worry, they're used to it, hard as nails'. The countryside version of the rush hour starts early too, the sun, then the crows, then the sheep, then the oystercatchers and then the rabbits being murdered by the Buzzards. The place is noisy and littered with rabbit carcasses.

The day soon warmed up and at the twelve noon start we were all lined up considering route choice for the first 100 metres as straight from the start line we had to drop into a gully and head for a small wooden bridge only 50 yards away. 300 runners heading for the bridge seemed ridiculous and in the mad rush runners headed off in all directions aiming for the hidden summit of Black Hill (CP1). It's a hard run out as you can't actually see where you're headed until half way up the climb. After running along the top we dropped down a steep and shrub covered descent to the first of the two road crossings. They don't do stiles round here and we clambered over the first of the many wire fences on the course. The next few miles were quite fast as we ran along a farm track and then along the bottom of a small valley, crossing and re-crossing a stream.

Heading East, the next section was tough as we climbed on some rough sections to a col before descending again with some tricky sections into another valley bottom. After the second road crossing (with people handing out water, bless them) we climbed out of the valley heading for Well Hill (CP5). This section had some good runnable parts but the climb to Well Hill was mainly tussocks, hands on knees and hard work. One of the lads mentioned feeling 'well ill' on Well Hill and at the bottom of the climb a Dark Peak runner mentioned that 'this is going to be a hard slog isn't it'. 'Thanks!'

The day was beautifully clear and sunny and coming off Well Hill there were no problems with navigation as we could see the line of runners in front heading along a fence line towards the last climb, back up Black Hill (CP6). The final descent off Black Hill is runnable apart from another wire fence to climb and a patch of waist high bracken as we contoured round a small climb before the final drop to the finish. I headed straight for the little bridge this time to be welcomed home in 67th by team mates Mike Wallis 52nd (a magnificent 1st vet 50) and Captain Garry Wilkinson 56th. Colin Shuttleworth was 81st, Brian Horrocks 96th, Pete Booth 113th and Wendy Dodds, awesome as ever in 135th was 2nd lady Vet 50.

At the front end the race was won by Rob Jebb who outsprinted Morgan Donnelly to break the course record by about ten minutes. Angela Mudge in 35th won the ladies race and Simon Booth 1st vet 40. Clayton vets finished 4th vets team (keeping the pressure on for a Championship team medal) behind Borrowdale, Dark Peak and Carnethy.

Durisdeer is a great race, it has fast running and some hard going. The race seems compact, as much as 10 miles on the fells can be, the course loops round and you don't seem to get that far away from the start/finish. Some of the charm of the race is in its remoteness but if Durisdeer was a bit further south and perhaps had a village pub there would be hundreds turn up every year instead of the usual 20 odd. The hospitality from the organisers was great and the free tea and wonderful home made cakes served in the village church and eaten in the lovely little church yard finished off the event perfectly.

Paul Shackleton