

How to organise a MMM (or not) by Dave Wilson

1. Don't go searching for potential control points without a compass – on three separate occasions – don't tell Uncle Barry.
2. Don't put control points out in the mist when you are not sure where you are in the first place, especially when the feature you are looking for can be found all over the moor.
3. Don't put control points out when it is getting dark.
4. Don't put control points out on your own – always take someone else so you can blame them when a control point is in the wrong place.
5. Don't leave it to the last minute.

Taking over the event was not what I had in mind when I offered to help out, but in the circumstances it was the least I could do. Not taking on the job until the week before Christmas did not leave me much time to recce the area and put out controls. I was ill before Christmas, away over the New Year period and back to work on the 2nd Jan. In the end it was done in a bit of a rush, which showed in the mistakes that were made when putting out the controls on the afternoon before the event.

The area over Hambledon moor reminds me of Galloway forest in Scotland, where I have been on several occasions (to do a mountain marathon) and vowed never to go there again on each of them because it is so rough. I went out on three occasions to recce different areas and forgot to take my compass (doh). This didn't cause me a problem as it was clear and I could see where I was going – I still couldn't find the features I was looking for – but I could see where I was going. On the day I did remember to take my compass the mist was down and I definitely needed it. It did not do me any good because I still got lost. As a result, controls 7 and 10 were out of place. Control 11 was also out of place, which was down to me not doing a second check rather than getting lost. Some people did find them but it was better look than skill.

I set up three separate routes that would cater for different skill levels and ability. The easiest of the routes went south towards Hebden Bridge and was accessible from tracks and paths. I did try to put in some route choice between controls to test the competitors' ability to select the best route. The ability of pin-point navigation was not really an issue on this lower route and was designed for new comers, walkers and any doddering old codger that wished to forgo the delight of the swamps on Hambledon Hill. The other two routes over the Hambledon area were designed for the faster runners and skilled navigators, although the orienteer should not have found it too difficult. The outer route had one tricky control (12) that would be difficult to find when going in a clockwise direction. The rest of the controls were fairly accessible, had they all been in the right place, it was the terrain that competitors had to travel across that added value to the control. The inner route stayed on the Yorkshire side of Hambledon Hill and was there for those who cannot run as fast as the elite competitors. However, looking at the results there were quite a few who dared to venture to the furthest points on the map and did quite well out of it.

On the day there were 50 people out on the hill as individual competitors and in teams. Notable performances can from Phil Hodgson who was first Tod. Harrier and only missed out as overall winner by just one point. Dave Collins put in a fine performance (V50 – 210 points) as did John Crummett (V60 - 175). Previous winners of that most coveted of prizes the Golden Duck (Pigeon) did exceptionally well. Derek Clutterbuck, accompanied by his grand children, came in 30th and Jim Smith was several places ahead of this year's fell champion. First lady was Christine Preston, despite being 26 minutes late. First Ladies team were Lynne Griffiths and Jennifer Porter and first mixed team were Phil and Jacky Scarf from Calder Valley. Jon Emberton from Calder Valley won the event and the first guest runner was James Logue from Horwich.

Thanks to all those that took part and those that helped with the organisation, and thanks to the New Delight for putting up with a few smelly runners for several hours. I hope you all enjoyed the day and we need someone to come forward and organise the event for next year.