

Mendip Mashup 2011

For those of you who haven't heard of it, and I would imagine that must be most of you, as I didn't see a familiar face there, The Mendip Mashup is a fabulous event based up in Charterhouse, in the heart of the Mendips.

In it's fourth year this time around, it is organised (exceptionally well I might add) by Martin Berkeley and The Mendip Hills Hash House Harriers. Martin's daughter, Lizzie, had cystic fibrosis and tragically died in June 2007. All proceeds raised from the event go to The Cystic Fibrosis Trust.

The Mashup is very similar to an orienteering 'score' event, except for the fact that you get the map in advance. This adds a really fun element to the whole event as you can plan your run (or walk) in the comfort of your armchair, weeks in advance. And believe me, some of the keener competitors plan it to within an inch of it's life, working out split times between 'controls' and so on.

Just like an orienteering event, you have a dibber and have to find up to 50 'flags', collecting points (10, 20 or 30 depending on difficulty) along the way. Each flag has it's own name such as 'Gorge Best' or 'Confetti Corner' and a description like 'behind beech tree, next to bomb shelter' or 'under right-hand side of large tree stump.

Each flag is marked, quite literally with a flag! This flag will be green, blue or red depending on the value of the points on offer. Just to add some spice, there are 5 hidden flags, which are not marked on the map, though they are on the paths between the marked flags.

There are 3 options for the competitors. A one hour, a two hour, or a three hour race depending on your level of sanity. I had decided to go for the middle option of 2 hours. The great thing is that the starts are staggered, so that every one finishes at the same time, unless they are running late of course, in which case they lose points.

So, it was on a very stormy Saturday on the Mendip Hills, when I took part in my first Mashup. It certainly won't be my last. I had worked out a plan which I pretty much stuck to for the whole event.

Having spent numerous years trying to find orienteering flags, the Mashup flags seemed quite generous in comparison. Particularly as there was a stiff breeze blowing and the flags were in full horizontal mode. And

is it just me, or does anyone else find the sound of a flag flapping particularly satisfying.

My first flag was lucky number 13 (Warren Farm), a twenty pointer. Not too tricky to find this one as it was in a fairly exposed spot and I had eyeballed from afar before we had even started. No doubt worth all of it's twenty points as it was halfway up a steep hill. Next on my master plan was 17 (St Hugh). This one was better hidden at the base of a tree. It was then a case of following my plan, and trying to keep up a decent pace, with the best part of 2 hours on undulating and mixed terrain in front of me.

But what a joy it was. Some of the most stunning scenery on the Mendips (albeit seen through the copious sweat running into my eyes), and in dramatic weather. You could see the rain storms rolling across to the south, but they didn't venture over our slice of the Mendips.

Although the technical difficulty is probably of an 'orienteeing orange course' standard, there is an enormous area to cover if you want to be up there with the serious contenders. I only made one navigational error which led to me missing two flags. I found myself running along the West Mendip Way and enjoying the scenery, eventually reaching the high point (physical, not metaphorical), of my odyssey on Beacon Batch for flag 33 (Prosser's Peak). A long haul across some pretty boggy ground to 31 (Temple Meads), and I had half an eye on the finish line with about twenty minutes left on the watch.

My plan was working well, as I had a few more 10 pointers to Hoover up and I would be on the home straight. I had even managed to stumble across one of the 'hidden' flags to add another thirty points to my tally.

With the finish visible in the distance, I was running past the wireless station and expecting to see flag 24 (appropriately named 'Hello Hello?'), but it didn't materialise. Speaking to a fellow competitor at the tremendous after-run bash, he told me the wind had blown it over, and it had fallen into some undergrowth. The one that got away!

With time slipping past rapidly, I just managed to bag another 10 pointer (Pondland) on my way to the finish, before a final dash to the finish dibbers.

It is at this point that the event changes into an exceptionally enjoyable post-run, full on, social experience, with a well equipped bar (Cheddar

Ales), cakes, tea coffee, and if you want it, a proper cooked meal followed by more Cheddar Ale. My understanding is that the party goes on well into the night. Sadly, I had some child minding duties to perform in the evening, but there are lots of people who camp and stay for what I assume must be a terrific party. But maybe that's a story for next year.

By the way, did I tell you my fishing time. 1:59:56. Get in there!!!

www.mendipmashup.org.uk