

# Hellhole 10k - 14th October 2012

Surely the clue's in the name? When I mentioned to my long-suffering husband, Jason, that I'd entered this one, he blanched, and asked 'Why?'

Of course, I had an ace up my sleeve....Lesley Hellhound Richardson, whose idea of running fun (fun running?) is to make it as hilly, dark and muddy as possible. In the weeks leading up to today's race, I've had my fair share of such runs with the Hellhound, to the extent that I now have unwearable socks and trench foot.

Still, it made for excellent practice for today's race, on a lovely autumnal day up in Stanley. Lesley and I met David and Philip at the start, in what was surely the coldest race morning yet this season, reluctant to take off our many layers, and listening to David telling us spine-tingling, fearsome stories of his previous experience doing this race. The main words that sprang out were 'muddy' and 'hilly'. Should be all too familiar then, I thought, glancing at Lesley, who looked like it had been part of her cunning plan all along.

And then we were off. A field of about a hundred or so hurtled down the field towards the path that would take us to the C2C route, an old railway line. Once there, it was flat and gave me a chance to get some kind of rhythm going. I'd already lost sight of my fellow Striders, but for the first time in a race, I knew today was the day for relaxing and enjoying it, and not stressing about the fact that I was running on my own. Mental stamina coming on nicely, I realised.

We turned off onto the Hellhole section of the race and, at first, it was a glorious downhill stretch. I remembered what Trail Running magazine said about downhill trails – run 'em like you're dancing, so I did, arms flailing and legs churning at a great rate of knots. Dancing never felt so good! Of course, what follows a downhill stretch is inevitably an uphill stretch, and it was indeed long and hellish, ranging from steep stony bits to long muddy paths alongside fields. Well worth it though, because when I got to the top, it flattened out nicely and I was able to take more notice of the countryside around me, and the mahoosive horses that watched me placidly as I ran by. By then, it was about mile four, so I knew I was on the homeward stretch. Good job – I was clearly losing my marbles at that point, as I said good morning to the horses and asked them if there were any more hills to come. They said 'Neigh' and I heaved a sigh of relief.

Ha! They lied! As I neared the finish, there was one last hill to deal with. Ugh. But I kept on running, and in fact tried to push on a little faster at this point, as I knew I could feasibly manage a PB today if I could just muster up enough energy to crack on. And then joy of joys - a fairly lengthy steep downhill stretch to the funnel. I made up some more time in that last quarter of a mile and felt fairly confident this would indeed be a PB today.

As I ran towards the funnel, I had Lesley, David, Phil and Jason there cheering me on, so I picked my feet up and positively sprinted over the finish line. I'm a very happy girl today - I got myself a PB, a new T shirt and some packets of Haribo!

**My name is Ruth Whiteside, and I'm a Strider ☺**