

Pillar Woods, February 3rd 2008

Planner's Comment's – Brian Ward - HALO

Firstly a HUGE thanks to Brian Slater, it's quite amazing how much "behind the scenes" work goes on in map preparation. From actual mapping to tweaking the "printed" courses on the map, the control descriptions, layouts – and then Mr. S. even manages the SportIdent side of things for you, not to mention (but I will) manfully placing controls on the Saturday – ably assisted by Dave Offler, without the two of whom I could not have managed!

Also to Pete Hubberstey for generally liking my courses, but, as all good controllers do, pointing out a few places where things could be improved. I think I mostly took on board what Peter suggested, as, with his "fresh pair of eyes" he saw things that I had not – probably as this was my second major event planning on the area – the previous being Harvester. Thank you Peter(s) – also helped by Pete Harris – his second "pair of hands" – or rather "legs"!

And so to the courses – I always find it difficult to mix and match long and short legs, but not so here. The terrain is such that it is ripe to plant in at least a couple of really long legs, the difficulty is usually offering route choice without the involvement of too much track (or in Pillar's case) ride, running. RouteGadget is certainly a God-send here, as competitors mark up their routes it is satisfying to know, where route choice was offered, several versions of how to tackle the problem set were employed.

Several courses had some very short legs, these were really nothing more than "turning" controls – an attempt to keep the course shape "nice", as I don't like to plan in dog-legs or have "ugly" shaped courses!

Specifics – Control 60 – small knoll at the top of the map, we had one query regarding it's location and I would have to agree! I believe it was possibly miss-placed (by me) but could I find the original knoll and tag – no! I checked by referencing the obvious Attack Points and the next control to it (76 – Distinct Tree) and guess it was a little too near and a little off-line, but as the forest is so open and runnable I don't think it caused anybody any major problems.

Control 58 – Rootstock - I think Pillar needs a major re-think, but whether the effort is worth it is debatable! There are many, many tree stumps – which is where I agreed, early Sunday morning with the controller, that we should leave that particular control. I actually mapped in, later verified by Brian Slater, the HUGE rootstock about 20 metres SW, but then, it was pointed out to me, that, although you can see the roots, it was, in fact, a fallen tree – and therein lays another problem, differentiating between Rootstock, Knoll and Fallen Tree. The last option is easy – it still has a trunk attached, but the former two fall into that slightly "grey" area of individual mapper interpretation, as I'm sure many of you would have thought during your journey around the forest.

Overall, Pillar is now at it's best. It has even improved since my last visit in mid-January. Not often will you get the opportunity to have the option of running on the straight line through nice, open forest, I hope that you both took that opportunity offered, and, more importantly, enjoyed the experience!