## Northampton Ultra 35 (Shires & Spires) 1 June 2014



Start and registration were on the field in front of Lamport Hall

A well organised event promoted by 'Go Beyond's Steve Adams. On a bright and warming Sunday we had the race briefing at 8:20am from Steve – using a microphone so everyone could hear and then off through the 'Start' inflatable at 8:30am. Although we'd been told not to race until we'd crossed the main road a few whizzed away.

If you'd had time to glance around the landscape as we entered the first field still on top of the hill where Lamport Hall is situated then you would have got a pretty good feel for the terrain and coverage of the race. We started by dropping down through the first field - at the bottom of which was a bit of mud – surprisingly we did not see much more than this for the whole of the race. The last few days of warm had dried things out following a week of showers and rain. We were lucky.

Village followed village as we went North up to Naseby, West out to West Haddon, South down to Harlestone, before returning North through Teeton and Creaton to Lamport Hall. Each checkpoint was welcomed to drink and top up water supplies. The day was glorious, warm, sunny, light winds – although these conditions are not ideal for running 35 miles. By taking care with hydration and carrying plenty it was possible to keep going without getting spent – just.

Underfoot we had quiet back roads, tracks, footpaths, and some field crossings and field perimeters. There was just enough variety – with a few short steep ascents and descents to keeps one's interest and provide a break now and again. However, with the sun out the jogging along the tarmac roads sure felt warm. I was glad of sun cream and a cap.

The provided race pack included an overprinted OS map in a mini booklet. However this was a bit tricky to follow in places – I was glad I'd printed it out beforehand slightly larger. There were no navigational aids around the course and so one had to make use of either the booklet, or a pre-loaded GPS or both. I was lucky to have 'Help for Heroes' Richard running with me for some of the race as his Garmin coupled with the race booklet more or less kept us on track. Not so for some other runners such as Kate Whitfield and another Richard who off routed to do a 20 minute extra bit. However, Kate more than made up for it and finished with Heroes Richard and myself – she was first lady.

I didn't spot the tea and cakes that had been advertised for the finish – so had to make do with just more water – perhaps not a bad thing as rehydration was certainly necessary. And whilst doing this in trotted Emma David to complete number 6 of the Runfurther Series – similar to me. 6 down and 6 to go.

Nigel Aston