

Shoe Clinic Bell Hill Challenge 2018

Race Report

Despite nor-westerly conditions with the potential forecast gale-force winds and rain in the foothills of Canterbury, it turned out to be calm and warm as 280 runners and walkers lined up at the start line on Baldoon Farm at the base of the Bell Hill Forestry Block for the start of the 2018 Bell Hill Challenge.

Due to tree-felling and forestry work, the Bell Hill Challenge course had to be changed for the descent from the Bell Hill Summit, finishing with a loop for both the 18k and 12k events to the east of the summit.

The new course was measured at 17.1k, compared to the traditional course of 18.7k. However, times were similar due to the short, sharp incline on the second half of the route as competitors descended from the Bell Hill Summit.

This year there was a 12k run introduced which attracted a higher entry than organisers anticipated.

The first runner to the summit in 28 minutes was Hamish Elliott, followed by Tom Ferguson who was competing in the 12k run. Julia Grant was first woman to the summit.

Both Hamish Elliott and Julia Grant were never seriously challenged for the rest of the race.

Tom Ferguson, who owns Baldoon Farm, finished the 12k run in 1:08:03, 28 minutes ahead of 2nd placed Connor Anderson.



The first woman to finish in the 12k run was Katie Cory-Wright. Katie's win kicked-off a family affair with her father, Alistair, winning his age group in the 18k run.

In the 18k Hamish Elliott was always well ahead of 2nd placed Hayden Zervos, finishing 4 minutes ahead. In second place, Zervos and Sam Bell had a close race for 2nd and 3rd placings with just 10 seconds between them.

While Julia Grant dominated the women's race to win by nine minutes, the minor placings were hard fought with Fiona Dowling nabbing second one-minute clear of Megan Ryan.

Both Hamish Elliott and Julia Grant when speaking at the prize-giving function after the race, commented on the recent time they had spent training together in China for up and coming adventure racing, as being a good lead-in to this event.

Race Director Chris Cox was again pleased with the turnout. Cox said that with the number of events on at this time of the year, Bell Hill Challenge was proving to be an event that appealed to all categories and standards of runners and walkers. He believes that the course and fantastic views from the top are the features that bring runners and walkers back to what is proving to be an iconic and challenging mountain running event.