

The Kimm: A mountain marathon!

Mountain marathons are usually two day events in wilderness areas and you don't find out where they are until a couple of weeks before. There are different classes of different lengths and height gain. You do them in pairs and have to carry all your clothes, tent, stove, food etc for an overnight camp (in the middle of nowhere!)

This year's Kimm proved to be the toughest yet. Mandy and I have paired up for the last four years and have competed in the Cheviots, Scottish borders, Brecon Beacons, and finally the Eastern Lakes. Mandy, Trevor & Sooty (back from oz) met up as arranged at the Little Chef just outside Penrith, I had a last minute panic scrambling about trying to locate my walshes, said bye to Martin and the kids and was off my only family free weekend of the year - shouldn't I be going off to a luscious hotel for a weekend of pampering? - not bloody likely!

The event centre at Pooley bridge was buzzing with activity, we found the campsite and put the tent in a major pour down in the dark, then rushed off to register and find the beer tent. A couple of pints should help us sleep!

Next morning 6 o'clock, quick bowl of muesli tent down and kimm sacks ready it's off to the start. We were in the 'A' class (the second hardest in the event). They start everyone off (over-1500 teams) at 1 minute intervals. As you start you are handed your map for the day- 12 checkpoints to visit in order and then to the overnight camp. Mandy grabbed her map, had a fleeting glance and was off, I was still trying to work out which way up it was! The course for day one was 25 miles and 8,500feet of climbing! We set off over tussocks and heather, spotting a couple of deer and enjoying fabulous views of Ullswater and Hellvelyn, however I was feeling knacked by checkpoint 3 and felt like I was starting to hallucinate!

At checkpoint 4 somewhere up on High Street, Wendy Dodds and Nick Lavery ran past having set off before us, all down to Mandy's superb route choices. This spurred us on! We then met up with Dave and Helen who had decided to pack in because as Dave wasn't well. The next couple of checkpoints were killers, down 1000ft and straight back up onto the tops. No stopping, we just kept munching chewy bars, dried fruit and chocolate! By checkpoint 11 we were on the Shap fells (big, featureless, boggy, tussocky lumps) and it was becoming dark! I'd had enough! we had been out for over 10 hours, we met a couple of the teams and eventually found the last checkpoint. YIPPEE! We legged it down with head torches on to the camp in Wet Sledale (very aptly named, the setting for a film called Withnail and I). Tent up and stove on, changed into my dry clothes, full of soup, Mandys superb dehydrated Chilli, cake and custard and tea I began to feel human again. Next navigational challenge finding the tent the tent after going to the toilet - they all were tiny and green, some people put flashing lights on - a great idea. Mandy kept finding me wandering about trying to find ours- I couldn't even manage it in the daylight! We wandered over to the results tent to discover that 76 pairs out of 129 in our class had failed to complete day one. We felt well hard!

The weather was deteriorating fast with a gale force wind picking up and torrential rain so we wandered back to our tiny tent with our plastic bags sticking out of our shoes and went to sleep.

Next morning with no change in the weather we packed up put wet clothes back on .. Yuk! And started again. Sundays course was a shortened, severe weather one and took us up over high street from Hawes water, There were streams and rivers surging down the fell sides in every direction and the wind was so strong that Mandy and I had to hold hands on one ridge (well that's our excuse and we're sticking to it).

Six and a half hours later the sun came out and we finished! We were 3rd ladies team and 39th overall, A great result. We then collapsed into the food tent for stew and cakes and gallons of tea. What a weekend... roll on next year!!

Sue Roberts.

Waist-deep in water on the Morecambe sands:

Cross the Bay run – Sunday 2nd July

Time for a rare excursion into print, because I have to tell you about this bizarre race.

I remember, as a toddler, watching my dad and older brother setting off to walk across Morecambe Bay. I wasn't allowed to join them as I was "too young".

Last year I returned to the scene of my childhood mental trauma to do this race. You park at Hest Bank, catch a coach round to Grange-over-Sands, and race back to Hest Bank across the sands.

I've never done such a delightfully shambolic event. No starter: instead it was up to us: "Shall we start then? Is everybody ready?" Course: you had to follow the tracks of the lead tractor (a specially adapted, MOT dodging, cockling vehicle). As long as you keep to the tracks, you're safe from the dreaded quicksands.

The channels aren't too deep at first, but the main river channel was above my waist, 200-300 metres across and fast-flowing. Plus, there was the disturbing sensation of standing on flat fish hiding in the sand on the bottom and feeling them flap away past your legs. Walshes needed for extra grip on these fish (insert 'sole', 'rock', 'salmon' gags here).

On reaching dry land, a lack of marshals (she was having a brew) meant that at least six of us took a wrong turn and did a two-mile detour before the finish.

The organiser promised a better-run, more organised event this year. Hope not...

Simon Anderton