

My first OMM - 2008 Borrowdale 25th & 26th October

Long Score Day 1: 7hrs Day 2: 6hrs

22/10/08 Pre OMM

I shall try to summarize the main events that have led up to my current position. It all initially started whilst training for GNR06 that I had surprised myself by and like many others, catching the running bug. The next summer, after some common teething troubles and minor injuries, I was back in fitness and I can recollect what must have been August 07 lying in bed with my better half telling her I had made the decision that I planned to run a marathon. I had recently begun to tire of running up and down the canal and began to venture into Hardcastle Craggs, I was enjoying running the various trails, which I found more stimulating. It was soon after that, that I ran my first fell race (Blackshawhead). I knew that there was more exciting places to run than just the crags. It was when I first joined Tod Harriers that I became introduced to the different scope of challenges out there. Within a couple of months I was aware of this thing called the OMM.

I shall be running with OMM vet Ben Crowther – since volunteering. I have heard all sorts of tales from Ben and quite a few others regarding particular events that have featured in Ben's OMM escapades. Training has involved weekend long runs, aiming for more than four hours; we recently had a good run on the Yorkshireman, which was good for my confidence – knowing I could cover the distance. Some runs involved carrying kit, and some have focused upon navigation. Up until this all began I hadn't really used a map and compass since I was in the cubs back in the 80's. After the long runs carrying gear I usually have a nice open blister about the size of a fifty pence on the back of my heel. I usually get back from these runs, eat two or three Sunday dinners, drink beer then fall asleep. This coming weekend there will be no such luxury. I can only look forward to some cous cous and other dehydrated foods. Followed, if lucky, by some sleep – the tent we shall be using for this epic adventure race cost £12 from Lidl.

My family has been supportive but I think that they to will be relieved when I'm home and we can have a full weekend together (maybe). I am currently off work with a cold or maybe its PMT (Pre Marathon Tension). The weather forecast is currently rain, rain, rain and gales. I'm apprehensive but I can comfort myself in knowing that after that first night its only six hours till I can eat, eat, eat.

My Baptism of water

I'm sure you have all heard a lot about the OMM via the recent media response and a variety of forums and what can I say. Crossing over mountains and through rivers, there were gusts up to 110MPH, these made me curl up in a ball and sent me off course as I tried to leap over some of the streams. The torrential rain felt like gravel being fired in your face and sounded like fireworks as it rattled off the hood of my jacket. There were moments when I was cold and uncomfortable, my fingers were numb and lacking dexterity, but these short moments of discomfort were completely offset by the absolute sheer beauty and magnificence. Streams and waterfalls poured down the sides of the mountains like the white sauce on a Christmas pudding. It was awesome. Ben's navigational and motivational skills were fantastic. Sadly when we reached the camp for the end of day one we were informed that day two was cancelled and that we should return to the start by crossing over Honister – this may have been the toughest part of the day. The torrent of water roared down the road and the wind was at points immobilizing. Down in Borrowdale, cars were up to there bonnets in water. We weren't gonna be going home tonight.

After hot food and getting in warm dry clothes four of us (Ben, John Wright and Andy Horsfall) spent a crammed night in the car. Warm, dry, well fed and in good spirits. By the 7 a.m. the water level had dropped and we were heading home for 10.

This event is designed to test the mountain skills and judgement of the competitors and hence is deliberately staged at this time of the year where the elements play a significant part. Bearing in mind the ethos of the event and necessary experience required of entrants, the decision to allow the event to go ahead was the right one.

This was my first and by all accounts conditions were harsh, but next year I hope to again participate and next year I want two days of it - whatever the conditions.

Nick Barber