

Lowe Alpine Mountain Marathon

June 2011

Graeme Shaw and Warwick Anderson drove up to Scotland to participate in the Lowe Alpine Mountain Marathon; a two day orienteering competition for pairs with an overnight camp that takes place each year in the Scottish Highlands. The emphasis is always on providing challenging routes in classic high mountain country. The event has a tradition for transporting teams to a number of undisclosed start locations on Saturday morning to make best use of the terrain. The LAMM is very friendly and is a compact event with a limit of approximately 500 teams. Apart from providing average travelling time, the LAMM creates a great sense of anticipation by keeping the venue secret until 36 hours before the event. There are courses for all abilities - 5 linear and one score, you should not enter if you get lost on the way to Asda as you will need to be able to read a map and you should not insist on a bed, although running water in the form of a river is available as are holes in the ground and one man tents with 2 people in them. OK, there are portaloos but you get the picture! An ability to put up with blisters, trench foot, midges, ticks and various terrains except trails or any recognisable paths are an advantage. I had none of these and did it anyway:-) The LAMM will take you to wonderfully remote Scottish mountain areas that you may otherwise never take the time to visit, especially if you prefer a bed. The 2011 area was scattered with Munros and Corbetts and a Midcamp was another wild mountain location that allowed plenty of great courses for all. The location was 4Hrs Drive North of Glasgow/Edinburgh, 1½ Hrs Drive From Inverness! In fact we were told by e-mail on the Thursday before that it was near Ullapool and took us 12 hours to get to because of various road works and, sadly, accidents.

I would try and elocute the next two days of glorious sunshine running across fantastic landscapes with views across to Assynt but I really doubt I could do it any justice whatsoever. I have included a couple of pictures and hope from them you can get the general idea. We loved it and were blessed with great weather, of course it can be quite different in rain and poor visibility and high winds (nothing to do with Graeme). We were lucky, although we did finish thoroughly exhausted with blisters and sunburn, and from the photo I hope you see totally euphoric. We had a couple of 'moments' e.g., where I ran about a mile the wrong way and back, finally finding the control to 'dib' and collect to show we'd been there. That and a couple of poor route choices took us from 5th on Sat night to 9th at the end on Sunday afternoon, approx 13.15, having started in the timed chasing group at 6.50am. Usually, as in previous years, you get awoken by a bagpiper at 5am but thankfully this year it was a tannoy announcer informing us that it was well worth waking up to witness another miraculous morning. Once this had met with it's normal jeers and moans of derision the ensuing melee of tent striking and scoffing of breakfasts, mine was chicken flavoured noodles and 3 cups of coffee, we were off! Oh yes, I said I wasn't going to describe it.... It was quite painful, but great....and painful.....but great....

We did have a good race against 10th place into the finish on Sunday and it was a shame to hear them arguing but it's as well to expostulate both sides of the story. Yes, you can get quite intense, the recipe is perfect, tiredness, agreeing route choices (and getting them wrong), camping, picnic (!) spots, weighing heavily on relative personal strengths and resources. It happens, so please don't be deluded into thinking it is easy or just happens. You need a good partner who you get on with, Graeme is excellent, and you need a good sense of humour to put up with the sincerely hard efforts!

Following a bit of a wash from corner field tap, and a nice polystyrene container meal, and a bit of a rest, we were off, enjoying a job well done, and drove home through the weather most of the rest of the country had been putting up with, namely rain and wind, not Graeme's fault, and got home in 8 hours, which was just in time to see me in bed by midnight and only take all week to recover from being completely physically and mentally wrecked. It was ok though, I was at work....I'll try not to mention the hell that was the Knavesmire 10k race on Tuesday. That's another story.

