

## Original Mountain Marathon (OMM); 2009, Elan Valley, Wales, Sat-Sunday 24th-25th Oct



We always did like a challenge so on the back of several years of running I felt reasonably confident about it all, and Graeme Shaw is a bit of a mountain goat anyway so reckoned we'd be ok. Well we were lucky to camp in the dry after a 4 hour drive to Wales on Friday night after work where we had a good meal and a beer, so when we got up on Sat morning for our bus ride to the start we could afford to feel reasonably positive.

Remember to bring separate tents and bags and gear for this as you will want your rucksacks to be tightly and lightly packed with all other stuff; food, headtorches, cooking utensils, lightweight tent, energy regime, sleeping bag and mats and extra clothing, water proofs and gadgets.

The start was quite exciting with queues and klaxons sounding as we watched teams head off into the murk. We were nicely sheltered and warm and well hydrated, things were looking good. Finally it was our turn at the relatively benign time of 11.40 and we were off. Graeme's knees were a little poor from over training and possibly a touch of tendonitis so we took it



easy and it was thoroughly enjoyable, you can't help but get caught up a bit in it all, after all it is a race. Our clothes bore the brunt of early squalls and strong buffeting winds but we were more than happy. Unfortunately as the route wore on, us being on the C class half marathon per day event, we struggled quite badly from a poor route choice borne out of a hasty decision and then compounded by going for a checkpoint that turned out to be further than we thought and through a deep valley when we could have skirted round the top on a path!



Under such circumstances our general fitness and positiveness helped us through but then we missed a checkpoint that we didn't think we'd got to just yet and had to

go back and fetch it. This was followed by me falling into a bog up to my chest in driving rain. The balance of warmth, comfort and positivity can be upset by such factors but as a testament to our tenaciousness, despite it being touch and go for a

while, we bore the brunt of increasingly bad weather and appalling terrain as it became knee deep bog for 3 to 4 miles.

Thankfully we finally reached the campsite a little the worse for wear but essentially with our spare gear remaining dry. Once in the tent we ate our sardines with pasta or noodles, drank litres of sugary tea and generally warmed up and dried ourselves out, i.e., wet baselayers dried in the sleeping bag overnight and we both had a good night's sleep.



Sunday we made no mistakes of course, once bitten twice shy and we couldn't sustain making it harder than it needed to be again. Graeme's knees were getting worse, and a cold he had started with became poorer too. We could only walk the second day but the weather was lovely and it was a joy to be on the hills with the wind at our backs and the end in mind and eventually in sight. Despite dramas and mistakes we learnt

enough to have another go next year, and next time we might not get carried away by the 'feel good factor'. I think we came 197 out of 267 pairs, but we probably would have settled for just finishing.

Don't by any means let our exploits put you off, if you're reasonably fit and half decent with a compass it really is a lovely w/e away in the hills. We had soup and tea waiting for us on finishing and once the buses had collected us, albeit a long hour's wait but thankfully in the sunshine, a lovely meal provided at the end. There are several events other than the one we did, three routes of varying distance, C class being the easiest and B and A the hardest, followed by orienteering score events again of three difficulties. For class C it was about £45 each to enter. There have been other entrants from the club over several years and they are clearly enthused by the events, so roll on next year, it would be nice to stay fit to do it again.



Further info at:

<http://www.theomm.com/index.html>