

## Great Wilderness Challenge 24 August 2013

### 25 mile run Dundonnell (Choire Haille) to Poolewe

Registration was a relaxed affair where we chatted with 2 fellows who were doing the same run as me but carried nothing. Also met a some folks we knew from the community. All my fretting about clothes etc I should carry along for eventualities was blissfully ingored by them and it seemed they got away with it.

On bus to Dundonnell I sat beside Gordon Ferguson ( son of the late Alistair Ferguson, FC Minister in Aultbea) and had a good chat with him about running and his occupation off the coast of Angola.

After a brief toileet stop at Dundonnell hotel we embarked at the route start beside the path that led iniexorably upwards. There was a light rain and plenty of midges, the latter a foretaste of what was to be throughout the race. Only 39 runners so it was a small group as we set off towards the shoulder of An Teallach to the skirl of bagpipes

The first half of this route I had never done before ( the 2009 route was changed due to bad weather) so I was surprised to find the initial climb not as steep as anticipated. However, any race that starts with a climb must be demanding and so after 30 mins was covered in sweat. Eventually we plateaued and past the first checkpoint. Then a bit more ascent befreo finally beginning the descent that would take me down to the bothy at Shenavall. I really enjoyed this as it was the first time to 'relax' a bit and fall downhill practicing my rag doll technique of flailing my arms in the air to keep balance. Was now passing the slower walkers who had started 2 hours earlier. Eventually I passed another runner which was encouraging and found we passed and was passed by each other as race progressed for some time. However I was also passed by another runner moving incredibly fast but dressed in complete head to toe in waterproofs even though it wasn't raining. I could not imagine how much he must have sweated moving at such a pace or indeed why he needed to dress so. On the flat past Shenavall I was still in sight of the 2 runners mentioned previously who, as said, were dressed as if it was a run in the park - T-Shirt and shorts and carrying nothing.

The 2 ford crossings went well and I was surprised at how boggy it was between each ford crossing. Shortly after this there was another long climb which was really the most gruelling part of the race for me. It seemed to go on a long time! After summitting this I started to feel the first stabbing pains of cramp and I knew that I should have thought more about salt intake. The initial ascent had been v arduous and I should have thought then about replenishing salt intake as the eletrolyte drink doesn't do the job for me in hot or extreme exertion. Cramp continued on and off in one or other of my legs for much of the rest of the race.

Nice to get to the relatively easy going terrain around Carnmore and met my aunt Rachel at the checkpoint there. She had done this for almost every year of the 28 years GWC has been going. Another pain was in my left shoulder and put this down to the perhaps over enthusiastic arm waving described earlier. It was annoying and I was thinking of maybe taking paracetamol for it but eventually didn't bother. A bit further and I was back in more familiar terrain which I'd traversed in 2009 and continued in a fairly dogged but not too fast a fashion for rest of race arriving beside Poolewe Free Church in 5 hr 15 mins. I was met firstly by Elisabeth about 1 km from end. She had earlier completed the 13 mile Aultbea to Poolewe route in a v. impressive 2 hrs 36 mins. At the actual finish was met by my parents.

#### Lessons

1. *Use salt before it's too late.*
2. *By all means use arm flapping on steep, fast descents to aid balance but have some more economy of movement so as not to overstrain shoulders.*
3. *When in moderate pain I should use paracetamol*

## 25 Miles

### • Dundonnell to Poolewe •

- **START - 113852** - Corrie Hallie on A832.
- **Checkpoint 1 - 101824** - Summit of first climb. Just past this checkpoint, the route branches **right** at twin cairns and continues by rough moorland path to Shenavall Bothy. **Great care must be taken on the steep descent to Shenavall.**
- **Checkpoint 2 - 063807** - Abhainn Strath na Sealga. This river has to be forded, also Abhainn Gleann na Muice 0.75 miles further on. From Larachantivore (054802), the route follows a stalkers' path south along the riverside for 1 mile, then turns **right** (048786) up Gleann na Muice Beag for 2 miles to the next checkpoint.
- **Checkpoint 3 - 026779** - Near highest point of route. Continues over plateau before descending steeply towards Dubh Loch and Cammore. **Care required.**
- **Checkpoint 4 - 980767** - Cammore Lodge Gate. Continue over the causeway to the next path junction (968754). Turn **right** and continue to Strathan Buidhe. Turn **right** (945760) at cairn and descend to ford river. Regain path and follow marker flags to next checkpoint.
- **Checkpoint 5 - 928774** - Doubles as checkpoint 2 on 13 mile circular route. Leading runners will meet walkers on this section to Kemsary Wood. Follow forest track to next checkpoint.
- **Checkpoint 6 - 897794** - Exit gate of Kemsary Wood, where route turns **left** down to Kemsary Cottage, then turns **right** at T-junction below the cottage to follow estate road to Inveran and Poolewe.
- **Finish - 859807** - At riverside near Poolewe Bridge.

**River Crossings** - For the two river crossings in Strath na Sealga, the recommended procedure is to remove boots and socks, and use old shoes or trainers until dry terrain is reached at Larachantivore.

**RACE CATEGORIES UNDER SAF RULES** Map required - Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Sheet 19



CHECK/SAFETY POINT GRID REFERENCES	
Checkpoint 1	101824
Checkpoint 2	063807
Checkpoint 3	026779
Checkpoint 4	980767
Checkpoint 5	928774
Checkpoint 6	897794

