

Lakeland Trails Marathon
Sunday 1 July 2012
Report by Pete McNally of Beverley AC

More than a marathon



Pete McNally has completed many long distance events over the years but success in this year's Lakeland Trail Marathon over the fells surrounding Lake Coniston was a highlight on many levels. Here is his report:

This was my third distance event since reaching my 70th birthday towards the end of April: I completed 38 miles of the Woldsman at the end of April; I was the oldest finisher in the 26-mile Windmill Way in May; and I was one of only two 70 year-old entrants in this year's Coniston marathon. But the Lakeland Trail Marathon was a much tougher course, partly because of the very poor weather which made the rougher sections even more difficult to negotiate. The course is fiendish because not a lot of it is flat - when you find a better surface it's on a climb, while most of the descents and many of the smaller undulations are on difficult ground. But it's what you have to expect on a trail race in the Lake District.

After last year's attempt on the first ever event, when I was timed out at the third checkpoint on the six hour schedule, I opted for the earlier start with an eight hour schedule. These days I have to complete these events with a mix of running and walking, and my times are nothing remarkable with so many runners going on into their seventies and beyond. But having estimated seven hours to complete this route I was delighted to do just that. Despite the conditions it was a great experience, not least to see the outstanding ability of the accomplished fell-runners leading the event. The first guys shot past me at about 23K, despite having started 2 hours later! Darren Rodmell was well up and Pete Watkinson was also having a strong run as they went by. I was concerned that Brian Richardson hadn't caught me as I'd expected, but I learned at the finish that his calf injury had forced him onto the half-marathon option.

But there's much more to this story, for I was back in my natural habitat, having been born and brought up in Ulverston just 15 miles down the road. With my late wife Lorraine, also an Ulverstonian and a keen member of Beverley AC herself, we two 'Cumbrians in exile' often gravitated back to the Lakes for holidays and to visit family, and were especially fond of the scenery and tranquil delights of Tarn Hows. This was Lorraine's favourite place and mine too and was the clear choice for the family to visit and to scatter her ashes, when we lost her four years ago. There was an instant challenge last year when I realised that a marathon had been devised which included a double circuit of the tarn – how could I not attempt it! This Sunday I veered off-route there for a minute or two of quiet remembrance and there's no doubt the inspiration of those moments carried me through to the finish line

Would he attempt it again? "It may be an irresistible challenge, if I can keep a level of fitness, but I have a few aches and pains just now which are not helping my judgment!" he concluded.