

## **The mists of Mull - LAMM 2005**

Although we had never done a LAMM before, one thing was clear with a Martin Stone organised event, expect the unexpected! The released destination was Oban, but it was no surprise that on arrival at Oban we were promptly given ferry tickets and told to go to Mull. Fortunately we made the 8:30 sailing, and the off loading of the boat was great fun as hundreds of rucsac clad mountain marathoners gathered on the car deck forming a hotchpotched invasion force. The fun didn't end there though, as we were herded in a line, our rucsacs loaded on a lorry and ourselves loaded onto a narrow gauged steam train! This trundled slowly along taking us to the event centre where we registered, put up the tent whilst being feasted upon by the midges (I love DEET), and then ate for ourselves at the excellent Wilfs catering van. We then attempted to sleep.....

5:00am and the bloody bagpiper starts up.....grrrrh! A frantic dash is then made to the porter loo block to attempt to beat the morning queues. Breakfast then utilised the convenience of Wilfs, before the final pack of the event sac and a final bowel evacuation (for Simon) to grab our maps and make our start time. Our start point is actually a coach that buses us around the end of the island. We are eventually dropped off and have a further km or two to make the actual start. As we trudge along the road we are treated to the fine sight of a large eagle flying low overhead. An omen? The weathers not looking too good with low clag on the hills and the threat of drizzle and showers.

We make the start and are issued the controls. Whilst other Elite teams mark the first control and rush off we actually stop and plot the lot – we're not going to get a podium spot so why rush! Besides we shouldn't really be attempting the Elite class, Simon has been fighting road injuries and illness and I'm just knackered from both previous events and too much socialising at a London conference during the week. Still we're here now, and off we go. The first check point is simple enough, but the next is a long way off and we are warned of magnetic rock. There are a few teams around us and two head off up the side of the hill. We don't follow and risk the boulders and screes on the flanks to skirt round to a col. This feels a good choice when elite class stalwart Jim Davies and partner bound past us. We're soon in the mist and the navigation requires some care. We move along steadily and teeter over a peak at 860m, finding fell shoe scrambling a bit iffy in places, and gain the col with the control. Somewhere ahead in the mist is Ben More but we're not going there. And so the day continues with the mist lying at around 200m. There is a mix of long legs and short technical navigation sections, especially so in the low visibility. Every so often the compass goes a bit erratic with the magnetic rock, but generally the navigation is pretty spot on. However one control is overshoot and we lose time. It's a relief to hit the overnight camp. Its been a long slow day.

Morning arrives. Thunder and heavy rain hit the camp in the night but despite that we slept well. The slit trench is risked for the morning dump. It has the advantage of less queuing but you really wish the person in front would squat properly! We go for the 7:30 start and once again we are soon in the mist. The first few controls require good navigation in the poor visibility, and fortunately all goes well. A long leg then drops us down below the clag before another hard slog up. The day goes pretty well. We're

moving faster and generally feeling better than we thought we would. Just as we start to drop off the ridge we have been following to gain the last set of controls the cloud starts to lift and we are treated to our first views of the event! A few short controls later, which sees all the classes converging and used a mixture of shared and different controls all quite closely spaced, and we in the final dash for home and completion of our first LAMM. Its been a great event and in the end we manage 9<sup>th</sup> place which we're very pleased with. After food and tick removal we quickly pack and walk to the ferry (its probably quicker than the train!). There's even time for a beer in the pub on the way. On the ferry back to Oban it is sunny and hot, and the views of the mountains we had spent two days on were superb – Mull teases us!