

SLMM 2022 Planner's Report

I have been involved with the Saunders for a number of years, as Planner, Controller or Race Director. One of the greatest benefits of the job is that you get to know most of the nooks and crannies of a different part of the Lakes, each year. This year was no exception. What a privilege.

For 2022 we had two excellent bases, for the Event HQ and for the Overnight Camp. They were a reasonable distance apart, but not so far that most retrials could not make their own way back on Sunday morning. All that was needed was to put some circles on the map and join them together to get courses of the right length. However, there were four major constraints on the planning:

Firstly, a lot of environmentally sensitive sites, mainly marshes and stream courses, and most of them not marked as out of bounds on your map. This meant that I needed to locate controls in such a way that competitors were guided round these sites, and that resulted in a lack of route choice in some areas.

Secondly, Scafell, which is both very high and very craggy. No courses went over Scafell (and none needed to go over Scafell Pike, although I understand some teams did).

Thirdly, Wastwater. To take courses round to the far side of Wastwater resulted in a significant minimum course length that could not be avoided, so it was only possible to take the longer courses that way. So, Bedafell, Wansfell and Harterfell were all kept on the eastern side of Wastwater. Scafell, Kirkfell and Fairfield were able to use both sides of the lake, and I just managed to squeeze a decent course for Carrock using both sides of the lake.

Fourth, the Event HQ was located such that people needed to cover the same ground on the way out on Saturday as on the return on Sunday. Also, courses tapered into this point, so that a lot of people were using the same routes as others, near the end. One solution to this would have been to have a remote start and finish, a couple of km. away from the HQ, but that would create its own drawbacks.

It's my belief that control sites for mountain marathons should be clear and unambiguous. If they are located on small features then there should be a good "attack point" nearby. I hope I was successful in meeting that specification. Mountain marathon navigation is all about route choice based on good map reading, not micro-orienteeing trying to find obscure little features using a map that is not designed for that purpose.

There were some particular places that I wanted to share with competitors.

The Whin Rigg- Illgill Head ridge.

The delightful little valley at the head of Mosedale (control 138)

The stone circles at control 125

Charnleys Cairn – control 112. (Gerry Charnley was the father of mountain marathons, starting the KIMM, now renamed the OMM, in 1968. This cairn was built as a memorial to Gerry.

Great Moss, in upper Eskdale, which can feel like Mongolia or Tibet on a cold clear winter's day.

Control 144 in Mosedale. The Y boulder, which was climbed and photographed, in Victorian times by the famous Abraham brothers.

Course lengths are based on an analysis of winner's times in past events, on similar terrain. This year, the Scafell course turned out to be shorter than it should have been. My apologies. The Carrock Fell course was won in a time shorter than expected. Maybe the course was short, or maybe the winners were too good! Apologies for that one as well.

The Fairfield course turned out well, with lots of alternative routes being chosen. Routegadget shows the spread of route choices with many options being taken.

Finally my thanks to the Race Directors, Dan and Karen who were very wise and helpful throughout the planning process and to the Organiser, Stephen Ross, who can achieve anything with his team of loyal volunteers.

So, that's it. I did my best. I hope everyone enjoyed themselves.

Roger Smith
Planner. SLMM 2022.