

SLMM 2024 Competitor Stories

Three months ago my husband died suddenly at the age of 58 having suffered with Parkinson's disease for many years. Due to his illness, over recent months the amount of walking I'd been doing was limited. My brother (who with his family has done SLMM many times) suggested I partner him this year. I took a while to be persuaded! I am not a runner but have done a lot of walking in the Lakes over the years so the Fairfield course seemed the most appropriate category. Having the SLMM to prepare for encouraged me to get out walking as much as possible - great for my fitness and also my mental health. The event itself was hard but much of the time genuinely enjoyable. My brother encouraged, cajoled and bribed me (with Percy Pigs!) up and down the fells, the scenery was glorious and the sense of achievement on completing both days within the allocated time and walking 25 miles and 6000 ft of climbing was brilliant - I actually cried a few tears as we crossed the finishing line! And we didn't come last either!!

As first timers at a mountain marathon, we arrived bright eyed and bushy tailed. Expectations were high, morale higher. One thing which we were particularly pleased about was our kit, neatly packed into tiny bags we scoffed at the Pete bland van as we walked into registration. We could never be the kind of people who left kit or the last minute.

Several hours and many miles later we stood at the top of an astonishingly steep, bracken covered final descent towards the campsite. The air turned purple. One member of the team, who will remain nameless, had managed to bring shoes that were too small, too tight, too uncomfortable.

A frank discussion followed. There could be no contouring round, no climbing back up towards a path, no zig zag down and absolutely no direct descent. We had arrived at a stalemate. Had we been alone on the hills on Saturday we may still be up there arguing about how to reach that final point.

Our salvation came in an unexpected form, a rustle of bracken, a flash of bald heads, a murmur of how do and whoosh. Two men flew past on, bouncing along on their backsides. We knew instantly what had to be done. We too crashed onto our rears and bowled down the hill towards a hard earned rest and a delicious Wainwright.

We'll be back!

I just love this event as a way of pushing myself way beyond my comfort zone. This was my second year of doing the Saunders. Both me and my running partner are in our 60's and grandmothers! I had a good day on Saturday and felt strong, but on Sunday about half way round I went through a really bad patch and found putting one foot in front of the other so hard. My partner was great, she encouraged me to eat and drink more, slowed the pace and didn't let me give up. I pulled through! A big part of the Saunders for me is working as a team, helping each other through the hard times and enjoying the good times - reaching

the overnight camp, getting the tent up, chatting with old friends and getting to the finish with a smile on our faces!

Seeing so many competitors of all ages out there is was a totally inspiring experience, particularly seeing so many young people running around the fells with their parents! I just hope that when my grandson reaches the age that he can join in that I am still active enough to do the Saunders with him!

I have done The Saunders with my adult child every possible year since 2018 (excepting covid lockdowns and me having covid last year). It is a highlight of our year. My child has mild cerebral palsy and mental health problems and spends much of the rest of their time in their bedroom. We come each time hoping we can make it to the overnight camp. On our first attempt we had to camp in the hills, beautiful sunset to enjoy after making sure I'd got the message through to the organisers. This was the first year we could enter the Fairfield course and we were delighted to make the campsite and get some points. I'm not sure this story will inspire others as we are approaching the challenge from a rather different direction from other people but we both push ourselves to walk our modest distance and feel huge satisfaction and a sense of achievement each time. At the end of each day we enjoy meeting up with friends and discussing route choices, weather and kit whilst feeling pleasantly exhausted from fresh air and effort. The Saunders is one of the handful of things my child can feel positive about in their life.

My husband, Nigel, and I ran the Fairfield course together this year. We've been married for 25 years and, although we've both run lots of mountain marathons in the past, we'd never done one together. But this year, when none of our usual partners were available, we were left with no other option! (The other option would have been not to do it, which was not an option – all of our three children were entered and we didn't want to miss out.) So we set off, with some trepidation on my part, as Nigel is much stronger and faster than me. In some ways, it was like a 25-year marriage in miniature: setting out with high expectations but some nervousness, going through a few rocky patches on the way (such as when I realised I'd left my compass behind at the previous control and we needed to go back up two index contours to retrieve it), and ultimately settling into a rhythm that seemed to work (bar a few aches and pains). By the end of Day 1, we were astonished to find ourselves the top mixed pair on Fairfield! We had a lovely evening at the overnight camp, hanging out with our children and various friends (the Saunders overnight camp is the place to catch up with people you haven't seen all year). The next day, we set off in high spirits, having planned what we thought was a deviously cunning route, with high hopes of a trophy in our heads. We pushed hard, but it was tough going (another marriage analogy?). Our kids, who had all finished earlier than us, were there to cheer at the run in. It turned out we'd dropped a few places on Day 2, so our dreams of trophies were dashed, but we were happy with how we'd run (and we ended up the first mixed vets pair). More importantly, though, we'd survived with our bodies – and marriage – more or less intact. We might even go it again together next year...

With aspirational dreams of being "monster hill fit" by July, it was still winter when we chose to do Kirkfell. And so, in July and as we ventured round - checkpoint by check point - the realisation dawned, it certainly wasn't the nav that was going to elude us, but that mystical hill fitness.

Yet, undeterred we dug deep and hung onto the mantra, "it's just one foot in front of the other,

think of the halfway camp".

Then from our final checkpoint, halfway up the hillside, we spied our prize - an oasis of tents - a nirvana so welcome, I even forgave my partner for making us go back up to summit Hartsop Dodd, before a quad bursting descent into the camp field!

Right priorities first. Collect beer and milk from event tent? Check. Locate friends? Check. Tent up and stove on? Check. Relax, eat, beer, repeat? Check.

The trials of the day melted away as we laughed and chatted, sharing our experiences. We could even hear the England game and tried to work out the score based on camper's cheers - "it's like a giant Firepot festival in that top field corner" my friend said.

This is brilliant. Do we really have to do more hills tomorrow??

Yet in the morning, as we put back on our packs, we had a new resolve - the half way camp was no longer our prize. Our focus now shifted to the finish line and getting a hot shower. Along the way, the hills were just as tough but determination was ours. Unbelievably we managed to run from our final checkpoint to the finish line, where even a final lap of the field could not dampen our stride - we'd done it!! Feeling slightly broken but proud of our achievements.

It was my first mountain marathon. We have done it as the international team, with my more experienced friend. Must say that the views and the people that organized and participated in the event were so nice that even when the competition was quite challenging I loved it to the core. Getting wet feet in stream, running in the grass as tall as I am and growing mentally from long distance will be something I will remember for years. Thank you!!!

I'm a mountain leader from Glencoe and have shared over 1500 Munro summits with clients and friends throughout all seasons yet I can't honestly recall having quite as much fun in the hills as I had this weekend at the Saunders!

My first ever Saunders, my first ever Mountain Marathon and I am well and truly hooked! Memories I will cherish for a lifetime. Thankyou SLMM

My teammate and I didn't manage to get much training in before this event but had both done off road marathons this year. We listened to advice from our friends, who complete this event every year and it paid off. I haven't done the event for 20 years but found that it is still very well organised and everyone seems to have a good time. Day 1 was certainly a challenge but day 2 was more forgiving on the ascent, so we didn't feel totally exhausted at the end. The food was amazing 😊 and a very welcome boost before travelling home. Great to see so many young people competing and enjoying quality time on the fells.

Doing the Fairfield Course allowed for flexibility, so it can be walked. At 73, I chose to finish off with a river crossing to avoid road walking. Navigation skills allow one to get as many points as those who are running. One has a chance to see and appreciate the weekend's fantastic weather with it's clouds and clear views.

Watching an England penalty shoot out with a 30 second delay to others in the field certainly took some of the stress out of it!

Me & my partner Liz had to cross a fairly deep bog. After deliberation of the best location to cross, I waded through with the water at knee height. It was a bit of a struggle with the muddy

floor, but okay. I was looking forward to giggling at Liz's attempt to cross! Liz entered the bog, and immediately fell in to chest height! I ended up having to pull her out as she was stuck in the mud... it was the funniest thing I've seen in a long time!

Straight afterwards we had a brutal climb, the fall made us laugh all the way up even with the steep ascent so got us through. It certainly won't be a day that we will forget in a long time :)

I entered as a total novice with just road running and fell hiking history. It made me so much more aware of my own abilities and areas I want to get stronger in. The Lakes will always be awe inspiring and I loved the chance to see it from an angle I hadn't seen from my hikes. It's a privilege to be able to see the quieter and more wild sides of such a beautiful place.

This was my first time at the SLMM and at an event of this kind, so I had idea what to expect going into it. But I had so much fun! It was incredibly tough and challenging, but it was such a beautiful course and the atmosphere was filled with so much warmth from everyone involved. I also loved the scattered cheers throughout the campsite while the penalties were going on! I'll definitely be back for more next year!

2024 was my 5th Saunders with my husband, and is a special event for us. We started on Wansfell, did a couple of years on Harter, and now a couple of years on Carrock. It's so nice to see our progression and improvement as a team over the years through the courses and through our relationship. This year was our first year running as a married couple! Here's to many more years, what a fantastic event, amazing community spirit, always a highlight of our year.

With a combined age of 130 our friends think we are mad putting ourselves through these events. We use our preparation for the SLMM weekends and the events themselves as training for our summer alpine holidays. It challenges us to find what we are physically capable of (especially the lack of sleep), to prepare ourselves for long alpine ascents, days of rough terrain and sleep deprived mountain hut nights!

We may not be in contention for a SLMM winners medal but we are in contention for living the high life of retirement!

Whilst checking my Garmin data, after the event, I realised the fastest pace I managed to achieve, by some considerable margin, was while I was depending to control point eight at the end of Day 1. I tried an orderly bum slide down the fell. At 20mph plus then ploughing into the bracken like crash test dummy, I thought my blunder had gone unnoticed but alas garmin knew. You never know when your going to beat your personal record. Plus it knocked 40 years off my age for the remainder of the day.

This was my first mm and it's so well organised, with lots of lovely volunteers and runners. My running partner as done several and he was my main lead. You guys are my new family, kind, polite and just lovely. See you next year. ❤️ ❤️

My husband was looking for a running partner and on the spur of the moment asked his sister. She is not a runner and had never done anything like this before. However, her husband having recently died, the preparation and challenge gave her something to focus on. My husband's patience and excellent navigation and her determination got them round Fairfield with a

respectable score. She burst into tears on the finishing line, overcome by the whole weekend and by that evening she was recounting her amazing achievement to her son with pride.

I was 50/50 about taking part this year because of an Achilles injury, but decided to give it go because my partner was really supportive and said we always had an option to drop to a shorter course at the campsite.

I was so glad we did it. We slowed down and I was able to took in a part of the Lake District that I hadn't experienced. It was a tough weekend but we were both elated to get to the end. The chilli never tasted better!

We were in 8th place after Saturdays run which we were very pleased with. Sunday was going well . We were pleased with a fast line we'd found and we crested a ridge right on top of the checkpoint. Unfortunately for us we didn't realise we were right on top of the checkpoint and after moving off course spent the next 20 minutes hunting around and wading through chest high bracken. Needless to say we didn't finish Sunday in 8th place! But that is what this event is all about. To do well you need to be fit and able to navigate. This is what makes it challenging and also rewarding.

This was the event where I was due to complete the set of: running a different mountain marathon with each member of my immediate family - Duncan (OMM/KIMM), Calum (LMM), Kirsty (Highlander), and Trish (Saunders 2024). Unfortunately Trish's knee gave out on Day 1 and it was not to be. It'll have to be next year, but at 67 years young, it's getting harder and harder for both of us! Still, it was a superb event!

My first time on an amazing weekend. Physically more demanding than I could have ever imagined, but with the help of my team mate I made it! So well organised, friendly with a great vibe throughout. I'll be back next year.

I've had a bit of a break from running due to a career change and being a busy parent. During this time I've completed the Hill and Moorland Leader Qualification and learned to love navigating. I don't have to follow other people round the hills any more! I like taking groups of women walking and introducing them to upland environments. I wanted to do this event to challenge myself and really test my navigation in an area I don't know so well. We were never going to be competitive even though my teammate is a Saunders veteran; just getting on the start line was a huge challenge for me. We ladies can do this. We can carry all our gear. We can get up those horrendous slopes and we can do all that while navigating effectively. My first Saunders, hopefully the first of many!

During the second day, running a ridge run, I heard a tremendous thundering noise behind me. As I turned around I saw a huge deer running out of the tall grass, jump over the trail path I was running on, and disappear down the side of a mountain. To see this huge deer, so close to me, and how effortless it made it look moving around, was the one major thing that actually make me stop and just appreciate how amazing this event is and where it's held. Thanks for losing me 30 seconds though on my finish time 😂😂😂

Sitting in the main tent watching videos 'to remind yourself' on how to take a compass bearing 10 minutes before your start time probably isn't the best way to start your race, but in case you're in the same situation as me, the Steve Backshall video is good 😊

No Story but been my first ever event (mountain marathon)
I could not believe the varied age of all the competitors and the camaraderie between us all from the newbies like myself to the seasoned competitors
Everyone was willing each other on and helping where help was needed even it was just to hold a gate open for a following runner or to praise after finishing it felt like a real community
Thank you so much for organising such a wonderful event and will and have already told so many people I now how enjoyable it was and rewarding
I enjoy my running and only took up trail running over the last six months or so after been convinced to enter the Saunders
I feel running and been outdoors is so great for your mental health but been able to do it in such wonderful surroundings was just an amazing experience 🙏

My partner and I have both done mountain marathons before and usually aim to run a fair amount of the course. We generally do the score events as we like the challenge of navigating and choosing direct routes to beat the faster runners.
This year we have both been recovering from injuries so decided instead of withdrawing from the event we just walk it and see what happened. We managed to come in the top half of the scoreboard so to anyone who thinks they can't do it because they can't run, as long as you can walk at a descent pace 2-3km an hour give it a go 😊

I'm not a runner as such but I can run on varied terrain and love being in the mountains and fells. I can navigate but not massively experienced but learnt so much from my partner and feel more confident. At times the course is hard but it's never going to be easy is it! When you finish day 2 you'll be buzzing. It's a great event and so so friendly. Worth every penny and I'd live to go back.

This year I finally persuaded my friend to join me for her first mountain marathon experience. I'd never been able to persuade her before, despite knowing she'd love it as I think she had felt quite intimidated by the concept. I didn't go in easy with choosing the Carrock Fell class and I might have exaggerated a little about the two-person capacity of my tent...but the friendly atmosphere and exciting challenge of a proper mountain marathon it won her over immediately. It's lovely being in an event that is all about the personal challenge and adventure, with no idea what anyone else is doing. We decided early on that we were not aiming for the podium but for the "waggiest tail" award. I think we achieved it and more as there wasn't a single low point, the chatter flowed, our team work made the dream work and we finished with my newbie partner buzzing to sign up again next year - for me that is winning! I woke up on the Monday morning after wishing I could do it all again.

We are two women in our late forties who had never done a marathon, never mind done one across a mountain range, carrying a tent and food for two days. We entered the Saunders in 2023 and found it very, very tough. But we loved it. The event was brilliantly organised. We felt safe and supported by the volunteers and had so much encouragement from other participants. We were made to feel we belonged. Seeing all the different types of people competing transformed our perceptions of mountain marathons - from something only the

ultra fit could do to an event that is achievable by anyone with the right training and attitude (and a comfortable pair of trail shoes).

I completed my third Saunders with my youngest daughter having previously undertaken it with her elder sister and their mum. We had a great time and my daughter and partner won their class in their first mountain marathon together. We were all beaming on the way home.

Crawling on all fours up the side of the mountain out of small water provided a unique opportunity for a close up inspection of the numerous beautiful wild flowers, mosses, bog cotton and thistles that were home to many different types of moth and insect. With the sun on your back and skylarks cheering you on your way it was a perfect Lakeland day

As a father and son duo deeply immersed in the world of fell running, our trepidation grew as the SLMM loomed on the horizon, presenting us with navigational and endurance challenges hitherto unexplored. With meticulous care, we packed and repacked our gear, scrutinizing every detail to preempt any potential missteps, acutely aware that this inaugural mountain marathon held a weighty significance for us. The palpable sense of nervous energy underscored our fervent desire to excel and avoid any missteps.

Upon our arrival at the event's headquarters, a sense of calm enveloped us as the proficient and affable staff efficiently processed all participants with a seamless grace. The initial day of the event proved to be a formidable learning experience, requiring us to adapt and learn swiftly, yet by the dawn of the second day, our newfound confidence shone through as we embraced the challenge making relatively light work of navigating between the controls.

The meticulously planned event and the thoughtfully crafted course imbued our journey with a sense of enrichment and fulfillment, leaving us feeling restored, despite the physical demands.

Upon crossing the marathon's finish line, a profound sense of accomplishment and rejuvenation washed over us, a testament to the transformative power of pushing oneself in a challenging yet rewarding environment. Deliberate and purposeful, we wholeheartedly recommend this experience to fellow outdoor enthusiasts seeking an adventure that transcends the ordinary

On Fairfield you very rarely end up going the same way as others but this year on day one we kept bumping into the same team like we'd ended up choosing exactly the same checkpoints. On the second day sure enough the very first check we saw them again and again and we had a good laugh about it. It reminded me of how friendly everyone in the event is even if you are competing against one another.

This was my first ever mountain marathon and my longest fell race to date. It pushed me outside of my comfort zone and I went deeper than I have ever gone before. I found day one really tough but the sense of achievement arriving at the campsite was immense and having a day on the hills with my friend and all the other competitors was amazing. Day two was incredible I was in the swing of navigation and running with a pack and I loved every second of it (the sprint finish around the car park was cruel guys!!!) I loved my time at the event and I definitely plan on entering again next year so thank you for a very well organised and run event!

I competed for the first time at SLMM with my Dad this year. He is 30 years my senior at 67 and it was an unforgettable way of spending quality time together. It was a wonderful experience to have together, sharing our passion for the outdoors and in particular the Lake District. We did the Fairfield Score course and my Dad was an absolute trooper - carrying a bag that was way too heavy due to a lack of lightweight kit, and suffering fitness issues due to having a fever the week before the event. The weather was however kind to us and we had a thoroughly enjoyable weekend together. Memories to last a lifetime!

9 years since our previous mountain marathon, two children (each!) and a fair number of other life events since, as much training as we could manage around everything else, and childcare logistics sorted... it felt pretty epic even getting to the start line. We may have finished 72nd out of 85th in our class, but finish we did, we had a blast and with no navigational or equipment disasters we felt pretty chuffed with ourselves. The kids even survived the weekend with their dads, which we reckon is pretty much a free pass to being allowed to come back next year!

This year we dropped a course at the last moment because of my daughter's niggling leg injury. The beauty of the event being that you can take it at your own pace, concentrate on the navigation, enjoy the scenery and the campsite company. Leg was fine, she enjoyed herself and we actually finished a lot higher than we expected!

It was my son's first event having turned 14 in Dec. He found the first day really tough but the friendly atmosphere in camp really inspired him and he loved the second day navigating and making all the decisions himself. He seemed to have grown so much in just 24 hrs. His smile at the finish line was priceless.

Fantastic quality time weekend with my teenage son. 14hr round trip together in the car, plus the time on the mountain and in the tent. A chance for us to be equal(ish), and physically push each other. He said it was the hardest thing he's ever done, but when I asked him on the finish line if he'd do it again he instantly said yes!

I had such a brilliant time at my first ever SLMM, but I'm not sure my own experience would necessarily inspire others. Instead, I myself was inspired and amazed by the number of junior runners that were taking part! What an incredible thing to share with a parent or any accompanying adult. I began fell running in my late 20s and have loved the adventures it has taken me on. Seeing boys and girls moving confidently in the hills has certainly inspired me to do more. I am already in discussions with a friend about a 2025 Bob Graham attempt...watch this space!

I met my running partner, Phil Wood, at the GLL 3 day back in 2019. At that point i took part in the Fairfield Course Solo before the rules changed. When chatting to Phil at the GLL 3 about the Saunders we decided to team up so we could carry on attending the Saunders. I live in Hull East Yorkshire and Phil lives in Birmingham. We don't see each other in between, but once a year we get in touch and hatch a plan to travel to the Lakes for some type 2 fun. This is our 4th year and we had another great event working as a team, sharing the different food we bring, encouraging each other on the tough 2nd day and talking through the nav when it gets sticky:). Phillip's son will soon be old enough to join him on the event but until then i look forward to running the Lakeland fells with Phil and enjoying my Wainwright Beer at the overnight site

whilst soaking up the priceless atmosphere of the Saunders over night site. As my old dad used to say to me "you just can't buy that son".

My team had a great time, a bit too much fun as we decided to stay out for 10 hrs on Saturday! No mistakes made, just hadn't listened or read the course timings and decided that we had till the course closed

The highlight was my partner and I were running up towards the knot when we saw a herd of about 30 deer running across the top in front of us. It made our day. I have not done a Saunders for a few years but had completed a few in the past, whilst it was my partners first event The whole weekend was a sociable and fun weekend with real camaraderie between teams and volunteers alike. It is exceptionally well organised with super clean toilets at both sites and an abundance of volunteers doing an amazing job of making everything run smoothly. I particularly love this event because you very often get good weather and the navigation aspect makes it a real challenge as does carrying all of your equipment needed to be out on the fells for 2 days. I like the added security of being fitted with a tracker so the organisers know exactly where you are at all times, including if venture somewhere you shouldn't! We had a full kit check after day one so there is no cheating. I am absolutely buzzing after completing the carrock course because I know I had pushed myself and realised I can still do it.

I had extreme blisters on my feet after day 1, I have to put a lot of comped and Luca tape on them, day 2 was extremely painful for me to complete, but even though it hurt to run, I had such an enjoyable time that I was determined to finish, and I did.

This was our first time doing the SLMM together in 20 years! Whilst we've done loads of other events together since then (I'd done the Saunders a couple more times with someone else), Emily and I had never been back to the SLMM as a pair.

It was Emily who mentioned it was 20 years and we should have another go. So we did.

What made it, was that the person who inspired us to try 20 years previously, our old Team Manager, was there too! We wondered if we might see him and there as we stood waiting for our start time was Ian Jones, volunteering for the event. A super surprise.

We had a great time over the Saturday evening telling him where we now were and what we were up to in our lives. Although Ian saying he struggled to recognise me because of my vanished hair was a harsh one :-)

Anyhow, we plan not to leave it another 20 years and are already thinking of being back next year. Perhaps doing a slightly easier course. We have to say, we love our Vets adjusted times!!

Our friends think we are crazy but the SLMM is our favourite weekend of the year as a couple! We don't get much chance to go away together but what could be a better date weekend then this! Spending time in the beautiful lakes in our favourite place! Yes it's challenging and one of the toughest events of our year... the seemingly endless 26 miles of tussocks, slipping over, twisting ankles, contouring, shoes cutting into your feet, stinging quads, energy levels at zero, climbing up steep walls of mountain with bracken...being pushed to almost my limit....but guess what...we LOVE it. The time spent sharing stories at the overnight camp with fellow competitors, the sunrise, the early morning walk to the start, the simple joy of a boil in the bag chilli and a can of cider! And the finish line smiles! The most perfect weekend :)

This was my first SLMM and it did not disappoint. With just enough information before the event I arrived prepared, but nervous. Would my legs survive, would our nav be correct and had

I packed too much?

These thoughts disappeared as we dibbed through the start control and set off at a brisk hike.

Blessed with good weather and good routes my partner and I had a great time.

Other highlights include the mid camp with our pre-ordered and COLD beers and the other runners we met at camp and on the mountain.

I found out why white bog is called white bog when I ended up thigh deep in it!

Well, it was my first competitive since a new hip, so felt special to me; I think we came 24th in an 'easy' class (my running partner is 70, I'm 62, so it felt special).

Have known about mountain marathons for years (primarily OMM) but always assumed they were for very hardcore, fast mountain goat type fell runners. Even though we spent lots of time in the mountains we just assumed they would be too hard for us. I heard about SLMM on a podcast and the runner encouraged people to try, explained it was in July so weather wasn't as awful as OMM and mentioned there was beer at the overnight camp. Suffice to say that was enough to convince us to give it a go, and then we also discovered there was an "easy" class for beginners which helped a lot. A score course would probably have been more daunting. We came with just kit we already owned so nothing especially lightweight, but we managed ok with heavy ish bags. We planned to treat it as an adventure/ fun day out not a race so didn't pressure ourselves and just enjoyed the route and scenery. It was actually much more enjoyable and comfortable camping than I expected, and the beer/ cider and coke really helped! We felt pretty refreshed on day 2 but appreciated the slightly easier route! The food at the finish was amazing!

The main things I didn't know were that

1. Day two is easier and quicker
2. There is drink at overnight camp
3. Not every class is a score course
4. Nav on easy classes is very easy
5. You don't need to buy lots of special kit
6. Lots of people of all ages, and speeds take part, and walking is OK
7. Option to downgrade on day 2

I was inspired to enter this event with my 16-year old son. He is strong and wants to be challenged and I am his old mum - he'll be running this event without me in a few years time! I wanted something that would challenge us both, but that we could share and come through together. It was tough, and we learned so much for next time (mostly around the advantages of packing light, which we didn't!) but we made it - and even managed to cross the finish line running! We both faced moments of pain and despondency but I wanted that, because having those experiences and then being able to overcome them together makes us stronger and more resilient. What a perfect lesson for my son who is learning how he wants to move through life! The hug we shared at the end was worth so much.

We were in 8th place after Saturdays run which we were very pleased with. Sunday was going well. We were pleased with a fast line we'd found and we crested a ridge right on top of the

checkpoint. Unfortunately for us we didn't realise we were right on top of the checkpoint and after moving off course spent the next 20 minutes hunting around and wading through chest high bracken. Needless to say we didn't finish Sunday in 8th place! But that is what this event is all about. To do well you need to be fit and able to navigate. This is what makes it challenging and also rewarding.

Alone in the field, tired, but making determined progress to the finish on the final day, we were surprised by a red deer bursting out of the hilltop onto our path. It stood, unfazed, shaking its head to get rid of bracken caught in its antlers. It reminded us why we love this event in the Lakes, despite how tough it can be.

Remember, you asked the question! I conversed with Stephen Ross back on 2022-07-06 17:00 by email explain how my wife Gill had found out just days earlier she had breast Cancer. Throughout the following couple of years The Saunders became the focus and the thing that kept her spirits up and a point to run toward. In the darkest days (and trust me there were some very dark days indeed) she looked at those photos and memories of running free. Well this year it happened, she did it. I posted the following on FB, I did tag you in, but I'll copy it here. "There is a small blue plastic sign that spends probably most of the year rolled up in a cardboard tube, it only comes out one a year It's the finish line for the Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon. But 2 years ago when Gill Parry last went under it she had just discovered she had cancer. Then 2 years of a crap show whilst Gill went through a 16 hour operation, Chemotherapy, radiotherapy and all manner of other proddings and pokings she was back. Gill made a commitment to herself to come back as soon as she was able and do it all again and almost 2 years to the day she did. @ Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon Thank you so so much, You guys will never know what your event means to us."

If you wanted a quick entry into camp this year, you just needed to drop down onto your bum and skid down through the bracken (depending on what shorts you had on depended on how much speed you picked up! 🤪😏). Also me and my running buddy opted for a sandwich stop with a view, other runners went past and were asking their partners if they could stop and have a picnic break too.... Maybe if we hadn't had our sandwich stop we'd have jumped up a couple of places! But we enjoyed our break and taking lots of pics along the way 😊😁

This was my first time completing Saunders Lakeland Mountain Marathon however it definitely will not be my last. I had an amazing time completing the Fairfield course with my sister, who I rarely get to see due to living on the opposite side of the country. It was a great bonding experience and despite coming last on the Sunday (came in over an hour late losing all our precious points) we achieved it all with NO tears and only a few bruised toenails! The positive attitude from all the competitors and volunteers made it such an amazing weekend that I look forward to doing again in the future!

Our team is comprised of neighbours, one aged 28 (Mike), the other 53 (Jim). Team name JAM FIRST! JAM because Jim And Mike, FIRST because Jim is from Cornwall (jam first, cream second on scones you know) and one day we hope to be first... 5th time lucky? We already have the bumper stickers...

This was our first time at the SLMM and we were not sure what to expect having only ever done the OMM before. We were pleasantly surprised when on arriving at the starting field we were

not greeting with a mud bath. This pleasant experience continued as we watched the rain clouds slip by as we miraculously stayed dry on day 1. At the overnight camp we were shocked even further to be able to sunbathe rather than our previous experience of huddling in a freezing cold tent for 12 hrs. As day 2 clouded over we thought that is it our luck has finally changed. At one point we even put on our raincoats in the expectation of the freezing cold deluge that usually is the calling card of UK mountains but once again the cloud slipped by. Our conclusion is the sun always shines on the SLMM so we should probably come back. Don't quote me on this when next year's campsite gets flooded out!

This weekend could have gone two ways for me. I'm currently looking after my sister who is long term in hospital and so exercise is sporadic at best and less than ideal for my first Saunders! Turns out the way it went was an amazing rest for my brain and somehow I found some real dig deep try hard, when I'd expected it all to be bit a bit much. Loved the weekend and now secretly feeling inspired to learn more about running and maybe maybe maybe think about the possibility of trying Tranter's Round! Awesome job to everyone who puts this on, I suspect it's an awful lot more work than we realise. Hopefully see you again.

We enjoyed the loud cheers from the Welsh contingent when Switzerland scored in the penalties. This was only beaten by the sunrise over the hills as we packed our rucksacks. What a superb weekend!

The Scafell course is a great adventure and completely achievable for many runners. Running in a female pair is loads of fun and the overnight camp really sociable. Would love to see more female pairs running the Scafell course!

As long as we're not disqualified! We didn't have enough tent pegs and had to improvise with sticks a few rocks. But we had a comfortable night thank you.

Two months after completing my third SLMM (the 2022 SLMM at Eskdale), I had a sudden cardiac arrest at the end of a local trail race. Very fortunately it was at the finish line, help was there and after CPR I was airlifted to Leeds LGL where I recovered and was fitted with my own SCD device (a defibrillator) which will shock me if my heart rate hits 250 (over 200 was not a rare occurrence for me). I thought my days of Mountain Marathons were over. However with the encouragement of my friend Andy Shortt who I had done my first two with, I started working towards this one. My cardiologist was fine with it (as long as I did less average weekly running than previously and avoided sprinting finishes). I did some mountain walking earlier this year and got running back up to 10km, although my confidence at pushing myself is still shaky. Andy assured me just walking the course with me would be fine with him and not to stress. Naturally I did and was a bundle of nerves leading up to the weekend about whether I still had the strength of body (and mind) to complete the course. As it went we walked the ups and ran when we could while my watch monitored my heart rate and if it got high we walked to be ultra careful (we were aiming for a max of 170/180 which we achieved). My lack of conditioning did tell and I tired towards the end of the first day but finished ok and had a great evening at the overnight campsite. Day two was a tough start as again my usual conditioning wasn't there but as the day went on I felt better and we had a hugely enjoyable run from checkpoint 4 to 5 to the end. I finished the event absolutely elated, a lot more confident and can't wait for next year. For me it wasn't about winning a category, but about the enjoyment of being in the mountains and part of the weekend and the challenge of just completing the course (we finished 19th which

I'm very proud of), and I'm indebted to my running partner Andy for supporting me to do it. Roll on July 2025 when I determined to be better conditioned.

We resorted to wrapping cocktail sausages with rainbow bacon to create a sweet and savory snack to power us up some mega hills

My good friend Annie Milner gave me 3 balloons with instructions to tie them to a wall at the overnight camp, by my tent. I duly did that + waited. She ignored them + camped somewhere else.

She's not my friend anymore. In disgust I tied them to my rucksack and ran round Sundays score course with them bobbing behind!

It was my first ever Mountain Marathon event, and I was the most nervous I've been for a long time. The idea of being self-supportive, running and navigating across two days of courses was exciting but a journey into the unknown.

The weather played ball and we were blessed with amazing visibility. Thankfully this made the many 'wall-like' hills all the more worth it for stunning views across the eastern Lakes.

Good company from my partner, Abbie, friends and other competitors really made it feel like you were never alone in the hills. And despite being in a two-person team, I was part of a bigger challenge.

Awesome challenging route choices, many many chocolate crepes and sheep admiration saw time fly by and dare I say I'm sad it finished so quickly. Definitely signing up again next year. Onwards to Carrock Fell!

It was our first time running a mountain marathon. Running the score was a fantastic introduction to the race as we would tailor each day to our energy levels, adding (or more realistically dropping) controls as needed.

Despite being an orienteer for over a decade, I completely blanked out the finish location on the map, and optimistically convinced myself the triangle we were heading towards was the finish as it looked like a tent!! I was very disappointed when I realised we had an extra km or so to go! Tiredness had definitely set it. The campsite was well worth reaching though, everyone was so friendly.

Day two was the tougher of the two despite being shorter, I needed coaxing round the final field, but was elated when we did finish!

My partner and I struggled with route planning and execution on the Fairfield two years ago. We tried a linear last year and struggled with that too. In the meantime we have worked hard on improving our nav skills, both out in the field and scenario planning. Our hard work had paid off and we are over the moon this year to have nailed the nav and timings, and placed way higher in the results.

Welcoming, fun event, helping you explore new places and push yourself as much as you want. Highly recommended to experienced racers and casual explorers alike

We got together with a few other groups of friends who were also planning to do the event, and camped together on the Saturday night. It was good craic, and a nice excuse to get the grandparents to come and babysit whilst we "socialised on the hills".

Best 2 days engaging and surviving with my daughter - beautiful scenery, alone on the hill with hundreds of others, looking for hidden orange-white boxes, forced to keep going through pain and rain!

The bum sliding was the best and funniest thing that I have done in a long time

Contouring over Low Raise we saw a spectacular heard of deer, such beauty, then the climb up Harter fell gully, such punishment!

Having taken part in 4 previous Saunders, this was the first where I felt able to run and be competitive rather than get round it by walking. I love that this event has always enabled me to take part to build my fitness, experience and confidence - thank you!

My son Leo is 15 now and this is his second SLMM. The "cross-over" point I've been long expecting / dreading has clearly happened. Last year when it was a real effort to nurse him around the course but he finished on such a high and the finisher T-shirt has been his #1 favourite clothing item all year. This year what's different & what's the same? Different: he absolutely beasted me and I was the one finishing in pieces. The same: we both absolutely loved it. I can't think of a better way of bonding with a teenage son. Just wish me luck for next year as I'm getting slower and he's getting even faster!

I met a chap at a checkpoint towards the Sunday finish. We had both arrived about 150m in front of our partners and I made a comment about waiting for them. He said I can't complain as mine is a 72 year old cancer survivor and I'm only 68. As a 61 year old (birthday at the event) I found this a hugely inspiring thing to keep me going in the coming years.

Thanks SLMM for including in your event the Bedafell course. Having previously taken part in several SLMM's (and OMM's) with my son (he's now too quick - i.e. I'm now too slow) I was extremely pleased to discover that I would be able to enter the event again this year with my grandson (age 14) - a 60 year age gap between us. We both had a great weekend and he's already talking about doing next year's event with his father!

Kate and I have been together for over 25 years. We've done loads of mountain marathons but this year's SLMM is the first we've done together. We wore ourselves out but had a great time. And our three kids also took part - the youngest and oldest together and the middle one with a friend.

I love this area of the Lake District and was pleased to see this year's location of the event. Over the weekend I traversed areas I knew very well, areas I hadn't been to for a long time (50 years since I last went to Blea Water!) but I still found myself in locations I had never been to before. My knowledge of the area probably influenced my route selection, but the beauty is that you never know if this is an advantage or a disadvantage.

Was telling my partner how nice it was to run over the tussocks without obsessing about looking for antlers (had spent a holiday on Jura antler hunting with kids) and she then told me

she had just spotted a single one 15 mins ago! We didn't go back..... though did see someone with one on their pack later and came across a herd of red deer!

I had a new partner in crime on his first SLMM at age 57, who really does not like camping and thought my tent at the mid- camp was the smallest /oldest and desperate looking one in the field, did not sleep well both the night before and at the mid- camp but loved it all the same and with luck will be back next year.

My daughter kept me running on day 2 by saying 'every second counts'. She was right. In the end we won our event by one second - a pretty close margin for 2 days of hill running!

This Saunders was my first ever, it was a truly exhilarating experience. I took part with my Grandpa who has been taking part in these events since the 1980's. The age gap of 60 years meant that he had all the navigational experience necessary whereas I brought the keen enthusiasm! It was a brilliant challenge to take on and a memory that both of us will cherish. A particular highlight of the event was on the first day when I went tumbling down a hill to the finish line, I nearly beat my Grandpa by a nose!

I had to make a last minute partner change. My mate Adam stepped up and dealt with doing the Carrock fell course for his first ever Saunders. He also dealt with my enthusiasm all weekend - thank you Adam!

I came into the event slower than a Serbian tortoise - thanks to weeks of hacking cough. The joy of doing Fairfield is it's all about choosing what you do and we weren't last!

Be careful, this type of wonderful event can become addictive. It was my 36th. consecutive S.L.M.M. and one of the very best. Our course, Fairfield, offered endless choice keeping us on our toes for the entire duration. The views from the tops were simply stunning. As has been said, the stars simply aligned for a perfect weekend. The weather was awful, but always somewhere else and never on us. For me, there were only two very, very stressful times during the whole weekend. The first was watching England in the penalty shootout on Saturday evening, and the second was watching the entire British Grand Prix, on a mobile phone, on Sunday afternoon, both with perfect results. We were the very last vehicle to leave the event centre field. This was my 179th. two day M.M. and I simply can't wait for next year. What a perfect way to spend a weekend.

How wife hates me during the event for making her do it every year since 2009, but still comes back for more.

Last year I had to take the graceful exit Sunday route, this year I really wanted to finish both days and I did! This is an event where every year I'll set myself a new personal challenge to test myself.

The sense of community was embodied by everyone gathering around the computer monitor at the overnight camp to watch the penalty shootout in the Euro 2024 quarter final. The winning England penalty coincided with my friends completing Day 1 of the Scafell route. They looked bewildered at the huge cheer as they crossed the finish line!

Having had 3 years off because I have been working overseas, I am very out of practice at running on this terrain. However, we entered the Scafell as usual, knowing that we would be several hours slower than normal. It was lovely to see Despina and Lisa step up to run this course, and I would love to encourage more female/mixed teams to give it a go. What's the worst that can happen? During day 1 on a particularly savage uphill, with rainbows in the valley below our feet, I asked my husband if he would walk with me so that we could chat. He said with a cheeky grin on his face - if I walk any slower I will fall over :-)) I think this is the motivation I need to get fitter and hopefully we will be in a more competitive position next year.

Have a good year gang and see you soon. Thanks for all your hard work

Would be happy to write more about our experience as a first-timer female pair! Even though my partner's ankle injury meant that we pulled out after Day 1, we had a great time sliding down the hill which can still be done with a fractured ankle(!), we hobbled to the finish and camped, and in the morning we woke up with everyone else, collected our control descriptions and made a detailed route plan over breakfast, THEN retired. We still enjoyed pouring over the map despite not getting to traverse it - it meant we knew what our friends were talking about as they debriefed the day over lunch on Sunday!

My partner and I decided to gain height as fast as we could after leaving the start on day two. This meant climbing up the extremely steep grass slope, having to use our hands to help us. I arrived at the first checkpoint to discover my timing dibber had broken off at the wrist strap and was somewhere behind me out on the course. It must have snapped off on the steep climb. I profusely apologised to my partner given we were not going to get a placing for my mistake, more likely a disqualification. We made the best of the situation and without hesitation carried on and had a great morning. My partner made sure to dib at each checkpoint even though it seemed a bit pointless to do so. I had the GPS tracker on my pack so maybe that could be used to evidence my participation?

We arrived back at the finish. I explained that I had lost the timing dibber and reached for my wallet to pay the fine and apologised again to my partner for a DNF. No need said the official, someone had found the dibber on the course and handed it in. We got a finish time and placing after all! I would very much like to thank the thoughtful eagle eyed soul who found my timing dibber. The situation proved to me that taking part in the SLMM is definitely more important for me than getting a time. But getting a time and completing helps morale not least for my poor partner! It made our 7.5 hour drive back to Devon more enjoyable. Thank you.

We thought we could leave the path and make up a bit of time by following a road. A steep slope with dense, chest high bracken quickly put an end to that idea. Bracken was our nemesis for this weekend.

This is the second time I did the 'Saunders' with one of my best mates, someone I trust (apart from with first aid kits....all will become clear). We were the very noisy brummies....if this gets published people will know!!! That's all I need to say.....Don't let him know this, but he is not exactly made for fell running.....however always inspires me as he is tough and his pain threshold is far greater than mine....like an oversized Jack Russell or bear, verdicts out. We had to DNF Carrick Fell in 2022, because of injury which was tough and was possibly a place I'd never seen my bestie before, part of me was proud for breaking him but equally humbled by his

determination. However, the next day he phoned me and said he needs to come back.....he showed no signs of ego or disappointment but just reflection on what he'd learnt; however constantly moaned about my very basic first aid kit of a sanitary towel and bandage (unfortunately I'd picked up an eye patch by mistake so had no bandage). Both of my medical items got attached to his shins at some point during the first day, I've never seen anyone take such a dramatic dive off a quarry siding in Borrowdale before; our any other quarry siding. So we made it back in 2024, a month after he got wed for a second coming of 'The Saunders'.....this time with his own first aid kit. We decided strategically to opt for Harter, good choice!!! Great course. We started early without being hungover after a night in the local establishments of Penrith (great pale ales....another reason I love the lakes, apart from its absolute beauty, history, clear waters, crazy weather etc, etc....) not sure about the dodgy rooms in the towns only techno pub; if you know, you know!!! Within an hour of starting, he's diving into my basic first aid kit, nicking Compeds because he's fancy first aid kit is in the bottom of his bag, then my anti inflammatory meds (no copyright to mention the brand)....and there we are working the fells again, two noisy brummies not in the pack of runners, being overtaken, taking the piss out of each other, managing our own struggles in that moment....this continues, add a wee dram on the hill....then continues with large amounts of banter through to day two.....however things are also tough; I would imagine we are both in our spaces throughout these times, I want to move faster, at times wish I had a new partner, but equally gob smacked by the sheer determination and stupid pain threshold of this dumb brummie....after checkpoint 3 on Sunday, I was waiting on top of the fell, questioning the time we had to get to 12 O'clock cut off for checkpoint 4....my best mate looked determined but understandably hurt, turns out the plastic bit of shoe had destroyed his ankle, plus a few twisted legs etc, etc.....We regrouped!!! discussed timings; this was the point where we could of gone to camp with a DNF, the dreaded 2nd DNF....not to be!!! We randomly started to discuss a film I'd watched about the late great Joss Naylor, I think 63 peaks for his 63rd birthday in 36 hours (officinatedoes please correct me) the week before. I remember watching as he stuck sheep's wool under the tongue of his Walshes to prevent rubbing, we had an answer!!!....we collected wool from the fell, shoving down the side of culprit fell shoes with a plastic heel (if you know, you know)....a moment of inspiration!!! Given to us by the godfather of the fells....total inspiration!!! I'm sure in my head there were streaks of sun hitting the fell in biblical proportions. Just what we came for. we made it to the finish, he even bloody ran it in.....and yes, I got the message about next year within a few hours of departing each other, let's get teams together, we need to go back, what class, let's train.....any takers.....Anyone need a new partner?....I'm exhausted.