

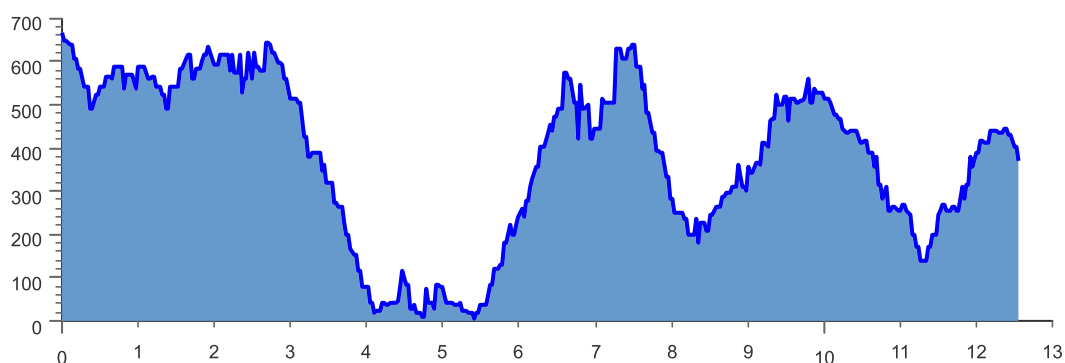


WHAT A SWELL PARTY

Well we have come back again, even though it has been a year of injury and precious little training before the event. Why am I doing this? There must be a reason.

We flew to Antigua and boy was my knee hurting. After an overnight stay we boarded an even dinkier plane than last year for the 20 minute flight to Montserrat. Seven people and the pilot was the maximum capacity. There were only 3 of us and the pilot.. The flight was smooth and fast and the pilot did a superb job and the landing was great. Even so as we lined up the full terror of the terrain could be seen ahead. The taxi drive to Olveston House made the terror even more real.

Memory is a funny thing, you know it was hard and steep, but the reality was even steeper. The gradient graph should have reminded me.



The mountainous course went up a total of 3120 feet and 3415 feet down according to Patrick. Where he got this information I do not know, but I certainly feel it is more up than down.. Anyway back to the beginning. We arrived at Olveston House and were greeted like old friends and immediately felt at home.

The next day we went exploring and picked up the race packs. On our rounds we visited the impressive Cultural Centre and saw the hand impressions of some of the musicians who helped Sir George Martin to raise the money for it. The most unbelievable thing is how small and pudgy Elton John's hands are.. Later we went on a boat trip to see Plymouth the former capital.. The devastation caused by the volcano was awesome and showed how feeble man's efforts are compared to the power of nature. In the photographs below you can see 5 storey buildings with only one or two storeys still visible.



THE RACE

Up at 4.20 AM and it is already a bit warm At 5 AM we are picked up and drive up to Blades Football Field and it is very, very dark and the hills seem even steeper. Shortly after 6 AM the race begins and dawn is breaking. I try to be sensible and set off at a fairly slow pace. The first hill was gentle, but the lack of training was already showing. It was hard. I began to think I am last then I see 3 or 4 people behind me so it is not too embarrassing Anyway keeping to the game plan is a must so I resisted the temptation to speed up.

At about mile 3 we begin the long descent of Davy Hill. I used gravity to speed up and take the pressure off the knees and ankles. Its worked and I am gained on one or two in front, I overtake and the joints are holding up. Down to Carr's Bay and into Little Bay. Where has the air gone; where is my energy? It seems totally airless, boy this is hard work. I slow to a walk and try to get the brain working. And all I could think is it is getting hotter and hotter. Just keep going



After about another mile or so my knee begins to hurt., but it is around half way and each step is nearer to the finish, run through the pain. After a while the pain has gone. Run down the hills walk up them. Please let it rain to cool me down. No rain it just got hotter and hotter. The hills got steeper. In fact I began to think that Ishwar had been out the night before and pumped up the hills. Every bend brought the hope of a down hill run, but these hopes were usually dashed as the hill just kept going up. And up. But the finish was getting closer and closer.

At last I see Desert Storm and begin the long descent to the Belham Valley. The only trouble is you have to run back up to Desert Storm once you get to the bottom. Cecilia is there to encourage me and I gather pace on the way down. The Ascent was somewhat slower as my legs did not want to cooperate. Somehow when I got back up to Desert Storm I coaxed my weary legs in to action and ran down to the Salem Sports Field. Round the corner and in to the finishing straight, Am I sprinting or am I delusional ? Keep pumping, break the tape running, that's all I have to do. I finish and start walking to see if I still have legs.

AFTER A FEW MINUTES - EUPHORIA. !

I have done it again, A bit slower, but I have done it. I have won the battle against myself and that is all that matters! Soon I recover the power of thought and begin to enjoy the atmosphere. It is unique everyone is there talking and having fun.

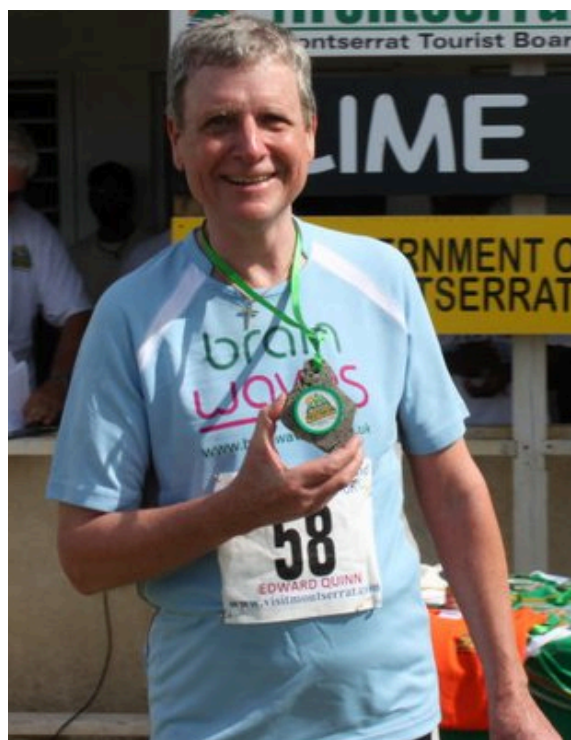


There is no other race as friendly and intimate. Where else would one of runners be presented with a cake to celebrate his birthday.?



THE MEDALS

The medals and prize money are now awarded in the relaxed Montserrat way. by the Minister of Sport The medals are made from volcanic rock and cut in the shape of the island.



THE PARTY

That evening we went liming..... The craic was good and the beer went down well. Fortunately we had some good local BBQ chicken to keep us reasonably healthy. The young and foolhardy went on to the nightclub and from the evidence next morning they had a very good time tasting local bush rum. This is probably as lethal as pochine and just as drinkable. As we were going on a hike in the morning we disappeared to our beds .

Now you know why it is called The Emerald Isle.!

THE VERDICT

Kerry a writer for Runners World who had lost count of the half marathons he had run.....
"This is the most difficult course I have ever encountered"

Dave of Uncommon Caribbean..... ***" I have never done anything this hard"***

The winner was the Olympian and ten time Caribbean Champion Pamenos Ballantyne in 1:23:43 Slower than his PB of 1:05: 03

Yes its tough, but we intend to come back...

.....Its such a swell party!

PS It cured my knee. And we raised some money for BRAINWAVES