

## Annie and Co

As Nick, Kath, Rob and Marquita were returning to this event Annie asked if I would be interested. It seemed a great way to celebrate a birthday the day before so agreed. Got our entry in early, Achilles problem came right and as the boss got time off work.

We arrived at the lake on the Thursday which gave us plenty of time to assemble bikes and enjoy the area. The house was within walking distance of the start finish which made Saturday morning easier. We watched the 8 hour teams running to the 1<sup>st</sup> control so had some idea of what to expect. With Annie not being very confident on the bike trekking and kayaking was going to be our main focus with the abseil I hoped. The maps quickly showed that the abseil was not for us but there looked like plenty of other controls for us to get.

Annie said we are walking to CP1. How about jogging? OK so off she goes faster than I wanted to. She is a bit younger but..... Arrived just before the couple in a kayak so missed the discussion about them having right of way. I was unable to attach the kayak seat I brought so had some problems steering and putting in decent strokes. Swopped places but that just dropped the nose of the kayak so around half way through happened to sit without the padding underneath but behind my back and finally I could paddle properly. We left out the furthest one but did get CP2 after a small error.



Now for the trek going clockwise to CP9. Found OK and on through 12 to 15. It was now time to use torches and ahead we could see what appeared to be a couple who had overshot as well as 2 coming up behind us just to confirm our course. On to 16 after a not so easy swamp /creek crossing. Now for 17 after Annie has changed her batteries. Me the hero leading through long grass only to walk hard into a log. Much blood and a broken carbon fiber walking pole. We lose sight of the others but hit the river turn left and onto the CP. From here to CP 13 we were slower than needed as the track took a long time to get to. I had kept to my bearing so really we should have expected not to cross it until the gully. Headed back to the transition skirting the out of bounds.

Annie was not happy with the track on a loop we had planned to do so elected to get CP22 on the way out and get the road controls. With another trek to come I felt that we had enough to fill in the night leaving us with the hope of getting the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> kayak. After the ride up to CP27 we set off to get CP 30. Found OK and then Annie mentioned the early plan to approach this control from the fence line above having done a clockwise loop to get there. As there were signs of cattle in the area it seemed feasible that they would track the fence line so we headed up. After 15 to 20 minutes this was obviously not so and bailing out straight downhill was also daunting so went back to 30 and down to the track. Next to 41 and 43 then straight back to Transition. We were both rather cold at this point and the fire was Annie's focus for the next 10 minutes. While I only spent a couple of minutes beside it that was enough to make a difference and the climb away helped to create some warmth. On the way out we got 23 and 21. While stepping up to 21 I slipped a little and stood on Annie's foot. This was not a good moment as it must have been very painful to start with. The swearing did stop after a while but I did watch my back just in case.

Riding across the road bridge like others we became aware of the wind and the possible effect on the water. It seemed a lot worse when we arrived at Somerset lake. We got the warnings and the prediction of it getting worse and not wanting to give up talked Annie into giving it a go. While Nick is very experienced in a kayak and would be confident, Annie quite frankly surprised me with the guts to not only start but stay out here for 46, 47 and 48. At this point the cold was setting in and there was still the thought that the wind would get up even more. Feeling that I had pushed hard enough we battled back to the transition. A ride back to the finish with no time pressure and a wonderful feeling of having completed this event.

Would I do it again? Certainly given that the arthritis allows it. Besides we have an old farts title to defend. Thank you Annie for your captaincy and concern along the way for my health and wellbeing.