

Most entertaining fell race ??

If you ask me what my favourite fell race is so far I might struggle to pick, but Lakeside Gummers How was definitely the most amusing so far.

It started with a full on sprint of about 800m from a field round the back of the Lakeside Hotel at the south end of Windermere. You have to run like mad to the lake shore at the front of the hotel, fight the other competitors for a rowing boat (some are in better nick than others and some are in a better place than others) row $\frac{1}{4}$ mile across the lake shore, jump out and leg it up and down Gummers How (3m/900ft), then jump back in the boat to row back across the lake. When you get to the home shore you are not over the finish line until you have scrambled (or more likely fallen) out of the boat up the bank and onto the rather elegant grassy lawn of the Lakeside hotel, upon which a bottle of ice cold beer is pressed into your hand before you have even got your breath back.



You can enter on your own (brave) or as a team of 3 (makes the boat a lot heavier and there are still only 2 oars!) Ian Holmes holds the solo record, he has won it at least 4 times including this year, when he arrived after having run at Tebay. Not only is he a brilliant fellrunner he can also row AMAZINGLY. He'd outsprinted his rivals across the lake and gained a massive lead before he even started to run up the fell. When he reached the home shore he stood up in his boat and balanced perfectly as it sped directionally stable over the last few metres into shore, then skipped out gracefully onto the bank before the boat had even beached, as if it were the most easy manoeuvre on earth. My team, on the other hand, after having a rowing showdown coming back across the lake neck and neck with an Idle Athletics team, crashed inadvertently with them about 4 metres from the shore. All our oars got entangled and the crowd were screaming at us to jump, jump. 6 of us trying to exit from 2 boats led to a fair bit of tussle and a soaking as we all tried to clamber over each other (very ungracefully!) to reach the shore.

This event is a real laugh but it is also a re-enactment of a historic event, as it used to be held as a guides race as far back as the 1800s. The race organiser gave a speech before the prize giving in which he held up a silver teapot which he said his granddad had won as the winner of the race in 1894.

I noted that there were also some very generous cash prizes to be won...so best get practicing your rowing.

Sarah W