

# Highland Fling 2012 Race Report

Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2012

53miles from Milngavie to Tyndrum

## Before the Race

A few weeks after the Highland Fling race last year I said to Katrina that if she ever wanted to run the Fling we'd train and run it together. The furthest Katrina had run at that point was a half marathon but she rose to the challenge. 2011 saw her run another half marathon and then the Loch Ness Marathon in 3hrs 50mins.



From October onwards we ran once a month on the whw route. January to March we built up the distance from 30miles to 35miles and then 5 five weeks ago 42miles. Katrina had put the miles in and was now ready for the race.

Our alarm went off at 3.45am. We were up, had some breakfast, got changed and left the house at 4.55am. We arrived at Milngavie Train station at 5.20am, registered, put our drops bags in the right cars, greeted lots of friends then made our way to the 6am start.

## Milngavie to Drymen

I felt that a time of around 12hrs was possible so I had splits based on that but I was keen that they were guides rather than a strict time to follow. The key thing was to finish the race and my hope was for Katrina to feel strong enough over the last 12 miles to enjoy it rather than have to slog home.

We set off running nice and comfortable. We ran with Ellen for the first few miles. Ellen was one of the original founders of the race and has ran all 6. Ellen's times are remarkably consistent, all within a 20min window from 11.42 to 12.01 so I knew if we were around Ellen we were fine.

We ran through the woods and reached the end a few minutes up on our planned split but comfortable. Katrina was running easy and we were chatting away. We caught up with Denise and ran all the way to Drymen with her and a few other folk.

Denise was telling me all about her 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary run in September, a 200mile 8 day stage race starting in Germany.

A few times I felt I had to hold Katrina back a bit as she was going just a bit too quick. All our mini-splits were a minute or two fast. I had thought 2:12 would be good to Drymen.

I chatted a bit to guy called Ray from Yorkshire. He had done one or two ultras but always really struggled from about 40miles so he was determined to pace himself better. We saw a lot of Ray all the way to Beinglas when he pushed on and finished very strong.

We started eating after an hour or so. I had my peanut butter and jam sandwich while Katrina had a pancake. We were also drinking enough. The weather was quite cold to start but soon got warmer as we ran and sun shone.



Just before Drymen my friend and work colleague Jonny ran out with his partner and ran with us into Drymen and then out the other side for a mile or two.

They had planned to run the race but Jonny had a bad fall coming off a Munro last December which messed up their plans! It was great to see them.

We arrived at Drymen in 2hrs which was a little quick but fine.

*Leg: 12.12 miles in 2hr 00mins 20secs (9.56pace)*

### **Drymen to Balmaha**

As we left the checkpoint I sent the first of my tweets to let folk know who we were doing. We got some good feedback so I think they were worth doing.

Once Jonny and partner left us we were on our own running through the forest. We shared the first of our 'what we appreciate about each other' moments. These were great as they were so positive and kept our spirits up.

As we ran along looking at the forest that is no more Helen Lees come running towards us pretty fast. I shouted to her but she went straight past. A few minutes later she catches up with us and explains she didn't know where she was and thought she was lost.

She thought all the runners were out for a training run. I'm not sure how much time she lost but she shot off into the distance.

Not long after Tim Downie caught us going really well. He went on to finish in 11.18 or so.

There were plenty of runner ahead and behind but we were into our own pace now and enjoying the run, beautiful weather and scenery.

We crossed the bridge and headed up Conic Hill. As we walked up we had another bit to eat. I had thought about 1:30 for this section and it looked like we were going to be around that.



The sky was so clear now and I was looking forward to the views at the top of Loch Lomond and they didn't disappoint.

Once we headed down we took our time and sure enough 8-10 runners went past but that was fine as we wanted to take it easy.

We went through the gate, heading down to Balmaha car park and saw Marco who was supporting Thomas. A quick hug and hello.

At this point Louise Jones caught up with us. She had taken a fall on the muddy descent and had a very wet backside! She was very cheerful about it and we ran into the car park together.

Debs and Cairn were out taking photos. Just before we reached the checkpoint Thomas comes flying by. He had started an hour after us and was leading the V40 race. It was great to see him running so well.

There was a good crowd cheering in and Murdo and his team did a great job getting our drops bags and refilling our water. We were in and out in 95secs. Katrina didn't want to stop as she finds she seizes up so we took our food to eat on the way.

*Leg: 6.88miles in 1hr 32mins 47secs (13.29pace)*

*Overall: 19.00miles in 3hrs 33mins 07secs (11.13pace)*

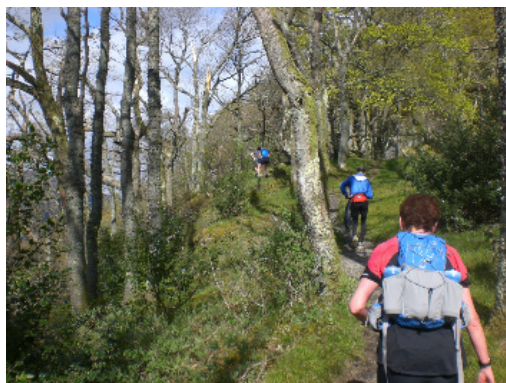
### **Balmaha to Rowardennan**

Just as we were leaving Andy Johns shot past chasing Thomas so I thought that's going to be a great race! I know Thomas finished 3<sup>rd</sup> M40 but not sure who won yet.

We walked through the car park getting ourselves sorted. We could see Ellen and Louise not far ahead and Ray not far behind. We settled into a steady pace and Katrina was still running well.

We shared the next of our 'what we appreciate moments' and ate some more food. I had my mashed potato and Katrina her marmite sandwich and fruit pot.

It was getting warmer now we took off one layer and felt a lot better for it. A steady trickle of the M40 runners went past us over the next hour or so. It was good to see them all running strong.



I had thought about 1:40 to Rowardennan and we were just a couple of minutes off that. It was another good solid section. Katrina had asked me to keep encouraging her which was no problem. I started giving her marks out of 10 for each section. She'd two 9 out of 10's so far!

We held our position in the field with no other 6am runners going past and we didn't catch anyone for a while.

Just after Sallochy we saw Sandra ahead. She was walking and once we caught up she explained that she was having real problems breathing and was going to stop at Rowardennan. It's never easy to decide to stop but it was the right decision as she has the full race to come in June.

We ran on and once again Ray caught up with us. About half a mile before the checkpoint we saw Ellen on the ground with a runner standing over her. She had fallen really badly and was obviously in shock.

We ran on to get help. I stopped a car and asked them to send back first aid. As we arrived at the checkpoint the medic was going back to help Ellen. We heard later than she's dislocated her shoulder and had to wait 3hrs or so for the ambulance. We hope she's all right and recovers soon.

Once again the checkpoint volunteers were superb and within 2mins we were sorted and off again with half the race done.

*Leg: 7.99miles in 1hr 42mins 54secs (12.53pace)*  
*Overall: 26.99miles in 5hrs 17mins 37secs (11.46pace)*

### **Rowardennan to Inversnaid**

We decided to run until the start of the hill and then eat something as we walked up. Louise caught up with us and was upset to hear that Ellen had fallen. They had run most of the way together.

It was obvious that Louise was running really strongly so I encouraged her to push on which she did finishing in 11.45 for a 25min pb. Once we were on our own we had the next of our 'what we appreciate moments'!

A few more 7am starts went past as we strode up the hill. About a mile or two up the hill Dave Troman caught us. He was beaming and obviously running really well. Dave and I are training for the Lakeland 100 together and I knew he was running really well.

This was his first race for 14months following an operation on his Achilles. He walked with us for a while then pushed on. The last thing I said was he'd have to go quicker than 9.40 to beat my pb!! Well he shattered that finishing in an impressive 9.18.

We walked the hill and ran the downhills and reached the single track in just over an hour. We ran and walked the single track. We thought back to the weather 5 weeks when we did our 42mile run. Then it was so hot we were looking for every stream to cool down. Today it was so much better and we were able to keep a steady pace.



A few more runners went past including Steve and Gyp. Steve is also from Kilbarchan and we've had a number of runs together on the Braes and the route.

It was great to see him going well and Gyp loving his run. They went on to finish in a pb of 10.22.

It was good to see the Inversnaid Hotel and to be able to tick off another marker. The volunteers were great and in less than 2mins we were in and out.

*Leg: 7.09miles in 1hr 47mins 00secs (15.06pace)*  
*Overall: 34.08miles in 7hrs 06mins 42secs (12.31pace)*

### **Inversnaid to Beinglas Farm**

I slowed down to send my next tweet update and then ran to catch Katrina. Just as I caught her I had the only negative moment in the whole day .... As we went past a family sitting on the side of the track I tripped and fell.



No damage done at all to me except a minor cut on my hand but I looked down at my garmin and the screen was blank with marks all over it! That's the second time I've done that in 6months. So another £65 for a reconditioned one!?!

So all the distances from her on are based on our training run which is pretty accurate.

The next 3mile or so is always slow going but we ran where we could and walked when we couldn't. Ray and another runner were happy to let Katrina lead. We were overtaken by a number of the 7am and 8am starts. It was hard to know which was which after a while.

We slowly caught up with Elspeth and then we ran in to Beinglas together. The first thing Elspeth said was 'Don't get that head cam out .... I don't want you filming my bottom!' I was tempted but refrained.

At this point we were about bang on with a 12hr schedule but I realised it was going to be difficult to maintain it. We had talked about a time during the week and I'd said that 12hrs is a realistic but challenging target.

Now I regretted setting it really as it was just a number and I didn't want Katrina thinking she had in anyway failed if we don't reach it. She wasn't as bothered about a time anyway but we decided to keep going and finish in the best time we could whatever that was.



We paused at Dario's post for a photo as we said goodbye to the Loch for another day. Ross went past us at this point going well. He went to finish over 2mins faster than last year.

We were caught by Robert Osfield and Ali Bryon-Jones after another mile or so. Robert and I have emailed various spread sheets and comments so it was great to meet him briefly. I'll be interested to see his time as he was hoping for 10.30 but I reckon he was going faster than that.

Ali very kindly gave Katrina a gift for her sponsorship. Thanks Ali .... Really appreciated.

Elspeth, Katrina & I had a good run into Beinglas where there was a big crowd cheering on the runners. I always find the checkpoints uplifting. You've been on your own for a while then suddenly it's full on for a few minutes before back to the solitude.

Once again we were in and out in 3mins ready for the final leg of our journey.

*Leg: 6.68miles in 2hr 05mins 23secs (18.46pace)*  
*Overall: 40.82miles in 9hrs 13mins 52secs (13.35pace)*

### **Beinglas Farm to Tyndrum**

Over the past few weeks when I've thought about the race I really wanted Katrina to get to Beinglas with enough left to be able to run as much as possible for that last 12miles. Now where here and she was still running!

Katrina was sore but able to run nice and steady. I encouraged her to break the last 9 miles into four mini-sections. 3.22 miles to Derrydaroch, 2.74 miles to the Big Gate, 3.63 miles to Auchtertyre and the final 2.35 miles to Tyndrum.

Ray went past again and that was the last we saw of him until the end. He finished just over 12hrs so his strategy of pacing himself worked really well.

There was a number of relay runners going past. Most said something but were very focused and didn't respond. Fair enough I suppose when you are running a hard 12 miles but one of the things I love about ultra-running is the way everyone does support and encourage one another.

It suddenly got really cold as the sun was hidden behind the clouds. We put on an extra layer and I thought it was going to get colder from then on in.

We ate some more food, shared our final 'what we appreciate moment' and soon enough arrived at Darrydarouch.

From this point on I was thinking 12.30 was going to be a good target and we kept it going as best we could. I was so impressed that Katrina was still running the runnable bits and her pace was steady.

Once on to the road leading past the 'smelly farm' we kept it going and it warmed up enough to take off another layer again. At the big gate we saw Jill O'Neill who was out supporting friends.

From the gate there is just over 6 miles to go. A 10k ... no problem. Katrina hadn't been looking forward to the rollacoster of the forest but the ups and down went quicker than she thought and soon enough we were at the bottom of the last hill and over the road.

We almost didn't make it over as we crossed but thankfully the car stopped to let us over!

We ran over the field and up the road past St Fillan's church ruins. We walked and ran the last bit into Auchtertyre. We were there in 11.54 so had 35mins to run the last 2 and a bit miles to the finish.

I walked to send my final tweet and then ran to catch up Katrina. My legs felt good and I realised how comfortable I'd been all day. I wanted to use today as a good training run for the Lakeland 100 and it really encouraged me to see that if I run well within myself I can eat plenty and keep it going longer.



The final few miles were great as we reflected on the day and what Katrina has achieved. When you think that Katrina had never run any distance until 3 years ago she has come a long way in every sense.

We soon came onto the final path by the river and then round the bend with the bag pipes playing and up to the finish. I was feeling quite emotional and so proud of Katrina and what she has achieved.



We crossed the line in 12hrs 25mins 12secs. John Duncan was there to present our medals.

Katrina thought she might be sick but wasn't!  
Emma and Hollie were there to cheer us in.

*Leg: 11.94 miles in 3hrs 09mins 39secs (15.53pace)*  
*Overall: 52.76 miles in 12hrs 25mins 19secs (14.08pace)*

We had a shower and caught up with a number of friends. Katrina was getting quite cold so we decided to miss the presentation and head home. It's a shame that we did as Silke sent us a text later saying Katrina had finished 3<sup>rd</sup> in the F50 category!

Thanks so much to John Duncan and all the volunteers and helpers on the day. Once again it was a tremendous race, so friendly and excellent organisation.

Montane Highland Fling 2012		Plan for sub 12hrs				Actual Sat 28 Apr 12			
		distance	time	total	pace	distance	time	total	pace
<b>Mingavie to Drymen</b>									
start	end of wood	2.21	24:00	24:00	10:52	2.16	21:38	21:38	10:01
end of wood	wall	2.21	25:00	49:00	11:19	2.19	21:33	43:11	9:51
wall	beech tree	2.71	28:00	1:17:00	10:20	2.73	25:20	1:08:31	9:17
beech tree	steps	2.61	27:00	1:44:00	10:21	2.6	25:30	1:34:01	9:48
steps	drymen	2.43	28:00	2:12:00	11:31	2.44	26:19	2:00:20	10:47
	<b>Leg Total</b>	<b>12.17</b>	<b>2:12:00</b>		<b>10:51</b>	<b>12.12</b>	<b>2:00:20</b>		<b>9:56</b>
	Rest		00:00	2:12:00			00:00	2:00:20	
<b>Drymen to Balmaha</b>									
drymen	path junction	2.24	25:00	2:37:00	11:10	2.42	26:51	2:27:11	11:06
path junction	bridge	2.36	25:00	3:02:00	10:36	2.2	26:59	2:54:10	12:16
bridge	balmaha	2.26	40:00	3:42:00	17:42	2.26	38:57	3:33:07	17:14
	<b>Leg Total</b>	<b>6.86</b>	<b>1:30:00</b>		<b>13:07</b>	<b>6.88</b>	<b>1:32:47</b>		<b>13:29</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>19.03</b>		<b>3:42:00</b>	<b>11:40</b>	<b>19.00</b>		<b>3:33:07</b>	<b>11:13</b>
	Rest		1:00	3:43:00			1:35	3:34:42	
<b>Balmaha to Rowardennan</b>									
balmaha	bridge	2.17	26:00	4:09:00	11:59	2.19	26:50	4:01:32	12:15
bridge	salloch	2.93	36:00	4:45:00	12:17	2.94	36:04	4:37:36	12:16
salloch	rowardennan	2.84	38:00	5:23:00	13:23	2.86	40:01	5:17:37	13:59
	<b>Leg Total</b>	<b>7.94</b>	<b>1:40:00</b>		<b>12:36</b>	<b>7.99</b>	<b>1:42:54</b>		<b>12:53</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>26.97</b>		<b>5:23:00</b>	<b>11:59</b>	<b>26.99</b>		<b>5:17:37</b>	<b>11:46</b>
	Rest		2:00	5:25:00			2:05	5:19:42	
<b>Rowardennan to Inversnaid</b>									
rowardennan	single track	4.40	55:00	6:20:00	12:30	4.33	1:02:29	6:22:11	14:26
single track	hotel	2.77	45:00	7:05:00	16:15	2.76	44:31	7:06:42	16:08
	<b>Leg Total</b>	<b>7.17</b>	<b>1:40:00</b>		<b>13:57</b>	<b>7.09</b>	<b>1:47:00</b>		<b>15:06</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>34.14</b>		<b>7:05:00</b>	<b>12:27</b>	<b>34.08</b>		<b>7:06:42</b>	<b>12:31</b>
	Rest		2:00	7:07:00			1:47	7:08:29	
<b>Inversnaid to Beinglas Farm</b>									
inversnaid	gate	2.51	45:00	7:52:00	17:56	2.51	48:58	7:57:27	19:31
gate	post	1.93	35:00	8:27:00	18:08	1.93	38:40	8:36:07	20:02
post	beinglas	2.24	35:00	9:02:00	15:37	2.24	37:45	9:13:52	16:51
	<b>Leg Total</b>	<b>6.68</b>	<b>1:55:00</b>		<b>17:13</b>	<b>6.68</b>	<b>2:05:23</b>		<b>18:46</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40.82</b>		<b>9:02:00</b>	<b>13:17</b>	<b>40.76</b>		<b>9:13:52</b>	<b>13:35</b>
	Rest		2:00	9:04:00			3:09	9:17:01	
<b>Beinglas Farm to Tyndrum</b>									
beinglas	derrydarroch	3.22	45:00	9:49:00	13:59	3.22	52:30	10:09:31	16:18
derrydarroch	big gate	2.74	45:00	10:34:00	16:25	2.74	47:55	10:57:26	17:29
big gate	auchtertyre	3.63	55:00	11:29:00	15:09	3.63	57:16	11:54:42	15:47
auchtertyre	tyndrum	2.35	30:00	11:59:00	12:46	2.35	31:58	12:26:40	13:36
	<b>Leg Total</b>	<b>11.94</b>	<b>2:55:00</b>		<b>14:39</b>	<b>11.94</b>	<b>3:09:39</b>		<b>15:53</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>52.76</b>		<b>11:59:00</b>	<b>13:38</b>	<b>52.70</b>		<b>12:26:40</b>	<b>14:10</b>