

GMC Lochnagar 2021 – Organiser's Report

“Any mobility tortuous on the high tops”.

The phrase stared back at me from MWIS. We had been expecting a mixed bag of weather but the high winds had snuck up on us a bit.

GMC Lochnagar had been a long time in the planning. Historically, the one item you can never control is the weather. It's plan for the worst, hope for the best. The plan for the worst is - Cancellation. With no snow lying or expected to significantly fall at the level of the courses, the wind and rain would be the issue. The wind however would be behind competitors on the most exposed areas. With the planned courses having numerous escape routes and the mid camp, at Spittal, having a block of old sheltering pine trees, we felt things would be OK...

The new item, the effect of which can't be controlled fully either, is Covid. The extra role of GMC Covid office was taken on by the Gramp Chairman, David Essan. A further new role of Assistant Controller was taken on by Pete Lawrence, in case either I, Ian or Sam had to self-isolate and couldn't attend the Event in person. From the e-mails I was sending out prior to the event, all competitors will know that we lost our initially booked caterer due to a positive PCR. Sheridan's from Ballater stood in at short notice and did a grand service, and we thank them very much for that.

Friday night saw our Heavy Kit / Hill Marshall Team of Sean, Mike, Graham & Donnie expertly erecting our amazing event marquee by torchlight. This was a scene very similar to the Morven event five years ago. I helped too, as Apprentice Gofer.

Saturday morning at the Crathie Hall dawns reasonable, but the wind is always present. It's always very reassuring when the helpers arrive. The required jobs get quickly dispatched, and I start feeling a bit redundant. Competitors start to arrive. Many faces are recognized as GMC Regulars or from other clubs or events. As the weather starts to deteriorate, it's good to see there is still much enthusiasm....

Enjoying a coffee at the local café before heading back to Spittal, a phone call comes through. All is not rosy at mid-camp. The marquee has seen some damage due to the wind.

Back at Spittal, it's obvious the marquee, although surely repairable, won't be useable for the event. While the Heavy-Kit team start to dismantle it, we others look at the alternatives. We knew we had the use of the Visitors Centre. We hadn't intended having competitors use it, unless in an emergency. We would now need to use it more, along with two Grampian Orienteers event tents. Pitched in a sheltered spot among the trees, they would hopefully be fine.

Download, and snacks & drinks are relocated to the Visitors Centre, and we're back in business!

I've heard many stories of the goings-on and efforts during Day 1, and there will be many others too. There was the solo competitor who had his map blown out of his hands, only to be generously given a replacement one by a combined team of three lady competitors, who then managed to lose two dibbers to the wind (miraculously one was subsequently found by another competitor). We were getting a right blasting at the mid camp, so I can only imagine how it was on the hill. I watched white horses spraying wildly off the roof of my own tent, before relocating it to a more sheltered location.

Tired, cold, wet, but generally smiling competitors started to arrive. Whether you completed your course or took a very sensible escape route option everyone succeeded in the real challenge of the

day. As the afternoon progressed, the rain went off, and when out of the wind, it became quite pleasant. The Hill Marshalls returned, having also collected all controls they possibly could have done. I hope everyone enjoyed their time at the mid camp, whether resting in the tent, socializing in the Visitors Centre or event tents, or enjoying a grand Sheridan's Pork Dinner.

Next Problem - at 5.30am on the Sunday morning I discover that there is no power at the Visitors Centre. Right – revert back to gas. Retrieve the big gas burner and pans from Sean's car and set up in an event tent, and soon we have boiling water for competitors. Then it's discovered that the Aberdeenshire Council toilet block also needed electricity to prime the cisterns, so there are now four very unpleasant pans! My wife Liz get the job of standing guard and directing everyone to the previously fairly underused Event Portaloos.

Although still very windy, the day is dry, clear and fresh. Looking out at Lochnagar and Conachcraig, I'm very envious of all those getting out on the hill. The first trailer of bags is soon filled and dispatched, as competitors head off northwards into the hills.

Everyone seemed to really enjoy Day 2 despite the still present wind. It balanced up the more extreme Day 1. Back at the Hall, we'd like to thank everyone who either thanked us or told us how much they had enjoyed the event. Its comments like these which help us to decide if the event will carry on. I for one hope it does – in 2023! We hope you liked the RUN GMC Lochnagar 2021 Mug and thanks to all those who provided a donation towards the River Dee Trust.

As we'll have unexpected expenses towards marquee repairs, and we weren't having a ceremony anyway, we have decided not to give prizes this year. We expect those winning the courses and categories will understand (they do of course get the bragging rights). We take the view that as everyone succeeded in the Challenge, we are all Winners and that includes all the event volunteers.

An excellent lively summary of all groups and individuals who helped in staging the event has been done by Rachel on the main Gramp GMC website, which I definitely couldn't better, but I do thank them all. I would just like to specifically thank Glyn Jones and Balmoral Estate for allowing us to put the event on and for their help throughout.

Dave Kirk
GMC Lochnagar Organiser