

It was a somewhat spontaneous act my signing on for "The Classic Quarter", a 44 mile ultra marathon organised by "Endurolife" along Cornwall's SW coastal footpath. I didn't regret it, far from it; it was an exhilarating discovery of Cornwall's most beautiful landscape.

98 runners set off from Lizard, our island's most southerly point at 6am on Saturday 26 June on a sunny and windless dawn, with the aim of arriving at Lands End, the Westerly most point, within the allowed time limit of 14 hours.

There were 7 water stations, roughly every 5 miles and 3 check-points where we had to clock in with our electronic tags. The route took us over long sandy and unpopulated beaches, across quaint little harbours where locals looked on bemused, up and down precipitous cliff paths with stunning views of little rocky coves with turquoise waters below, through tunnels of scented honeysuckle, then into the centre of Penzance which was in festival mode, here we had to weave in and out of crowds heading for the fun fair and then re-connect with the coastal path.

As we approached the second part of the route the profile became decidedly more mountainous and the pace dropped. The hot and windless day soon took its toll and I encountered a couple of listless looking bodies slumped on the path. Trying to be a responsible participant I stopped to inquire after them and in both cases the young men were over heated and suffering from sun exposure. I suggested putting on a cap soaked in water which one of them still had in his rucksack!

It was with great relief to my aching limbs when I could see the unmistakable outline of a hotel on the promontory of Lands End which was our finish. It had taken me 11 hours, i.e. 4 miles an hour. Not bad considering the challenging terrain and the lack of distance preparation. 20% of the competitors dropped out and I suspect the heat and the bright sun which reflected off the sea below played a role. For my part, I was glad of my desert hat which had long sides and was great at keeping the sun off, and especially for my electrolyte tablets which helped keep me on form through the long day.

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