

STUART HAMILTON

Event Director

The 51st OMM is now complete and as the dust settles it is a perfect time to reflect on the challenges just gone. Many refer to the event as Type 2 fun, something which is enjoyable in retrospect, however this year with the excellent visibility and dry running conditions, I hope that many of you will have taken some immediate enjoyment from the clear skies at overnight and the stunning views of a special area. I hope that all of you arrived home safely following the event and that the well-earned satisfaction from undertaking something both physically and mentally challenging is balancing out the aches and pains from your exertions.

I would like to start by saying a huge thank you to Dave Chapman for planning and coordinating the event, ably supported by John Britton as Controller. Dave and his Hill Team have spent over 60 man days in the Black Mountains identifying the checkpoints, negotiating permissions and putting the courses together prior to putting them out and collecting them in following the event. Dave and his Hill Team have combined experience in excess of 200 years of the event and it is truly humbling to work with such a dedicated and experienced team, ensuring consistency and the integrity of the event from year to year. This has been the most difficult year so far to gain permissions, the majority of the event area is designated as a SSSI with multiple landowners and organisations responsible for the area. I would like to thank the Partnership, the Graziers Association, the National Park, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales and all the landowners for giving us the permissions needed to hold the event. Unusually this event involved coming down from the open access land (which we still need permissions for) into the in bound areas in the valleys at times, this will be covered further in Dave Chapman's report and I would like to thank the vast majority of you for respecting the rights of way in the valleys. We had a small number of competitors who did not, crossed fences where they should not have, and caused damage. The event will repair the damage caused but this kind of behaviour causes significant problems for us and does not assist in any way maintaining the critical relationships we need with the local community. If you ever see this sort of behaviour please report it to the Event Control so that we can deal with it accordingly. For those landowners that were inconvenienced by our presence, I wholeheartedly apologise.

I met Mark Morgan at the OMM Lite and Bike in Cwmdru during which he suggested looking at his farm, Maes y Beran as a potential event site. Without his gracious support, local knowledge and willingness to host the event we would never have been able to bring the OMM to the Black Mountains, thank you Mark and Birgit.

Located above Capel y ffin (Chapel at the End) the overnight campsite offered spectacular views of the stars for those that successfully made the journey there. For centuries this has been a place of spiritual

retreat, nestled at the base of the Gospel Pass, and would like to thank Mr Watkins for allowing us to use this beautiful location.

David Broom has been a long-time supporter of the event, both as a competitor and hill marshal, but over the last few years has been instrumental in guiding our best practice with regards to our environmental and ecological policy making. Prior to the event David conducts a full assessment of the event area which subsequently informs our course planning choices, an assessment which is then repeated following the event over a 12 month period. The evidence generated over the past six years has shown that the event does not have any lasting damage on an area, giving the OMM much less restricted access to areas with significant designations.

One of the great pleasures during the event is recognising significant achievement both through the prize giving and the Year Club presentations. A huge well done to all who featured in these (see website for full Honours List) but I would like to make particular note of Phil Ward who completed his 100th Mountain Marathon at the weekend.

As many of you know the event is supported by an army of volunteers who take holidays from their work to come and ensure the event is delivered to the high standards you expect. This year I had the immense privilege of presenting entry to the 20 Year Club to Sharon Fishwick (Registration), Eddy Wane (Comms), John and Maureen Ashton (Start Team) and 30 Year Club membership to Dave Walton (Parking). Thank you to you all.

For those competing last year we changed the way the start times were allocated, and we have continued to review that this year, as we do with all elements of the event. The inclusion of all prize categories in the chasing and leading teams starts on Sunday made for some very exciting finishes and allowed us to expedite the prize giving ceremonies. Well done to all those teams that made the seeded starts and particularly to those that made the podiums.

As many of you know, the OMM is run on a not for profit basis and so the focus on the planning and organisation always comes back to the same question – ‘what would I want as a competitor?’ and I openly welcome your feedback in whatever form that may take so that we can continue to improve your weekend.

My final point before signing off is to say thank you to you, for those of you that joined us for the first time welcome, for those making a return appearance it was wonderful to have you back.

Preparations are well underway for the 52nd OMM taking place in 2019 and I am looking forward to celebrating this event with you all, wherever that may be.