

*The Cradle Mountain Run is a one day traverse of Tasmania's famous Cradle Mt to Lake St Clair Overland track. The beauty of this run is that it traverses wild alpine areas of Tasmania's Cradle Mt Lake St Clair National Park and World Heritage Area. The altitude of the track in several areas of the plateau is greater than 1000 metres, which by world standards is not high, but here is well above the tree line. This low tree line illustrates the exposure and harshness of conditions that can prevail even in summer.*

*This is an estimated, not-accurately measured 82km trail run limited to 60 runners. The event is a Run not a Race and mutual help is an important aspect. Hills are steep, the mud can suck your shoes off and roots and stones make the going slow for the less nimble footed. (Cradle Mountain Run website)*

At dawn this past Saturday the 1<sup>st</sup> of February, 55 enthusiastic runners were lined up single file at Waldheim, just north of Dove Lake, ready and eager to take on the annual Cradle Mountain Run (CMR). You could feel the excitement and nerves as a final roll call was carried out, followed by a countdown to the 6am start and before you knew it, we were trotting off down Tasmania's iconic Overland Track.

The Cradle Mountain Run has a rich history, with the inaugural run being held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1981 (5 days prior to the birth of this author!). Now in its 34<sup>th</sup> year, it was inspirational to see CMR Committee member Richard Pickup who completed the original run back on that day in 1981, toe the start line again in 2014 and make it all the way through to Cynthia Bay in an extremely respectable time! (I won't mention Richard's age, although it can be seen on the results page on the CMR website)

From the start it was clear that ultra and trail-running legend Stu Gibson meant business, and it wasn't long before he had hopped over Marion's lookout and was out of site. It would be the last time any other runners would see him until the finish line.

Following the 400m climb past the picturesque Crater Lake and then Marion's Lookout, runners were greeted to spectacular views of Cradle Mountain as the sun was rising over her shoulder. After overcast conditions last year (which were ideally suited to running), it was a real treat to have clear skies and not a breath of air, and as we came along the Cradle cirque towards Barn Bluff the entire Cradle Reserve began to open up with mountains as far as the eye could see. It was a real treat to be running in the reserve that morning as we passed Waterfall Valley, Lake Windermere, the giant that is Mount Pelion West, through Frog Flats, and then arrived at the first checkpoint, Pelion Hut, 34km into the run.

By mid-morning the temperature had risen significantly following the cool start, and it was clear that management of hydration was going to be crucial to the success of the rest of the run. Lying in the saddle between Mount Pelion East and Tasmania's tallest peak, Mount Ossa, the views from Pelion Gap were breathtaking before dropping down to Kia Ora hut. From there runners would spend the next little while (longer for some) moving through the forests before an exposed climb of Du Cane Gap, then would drop sharply down to the next check point at Bert Nichols Hut. Moving through to Narcissus Hut which lies at the northern end of Lake St Clair, Australia's deepest freshwater lake, runners were exposed to the sun beating down with temperatures now pushing 30C. Unfortunately for a number of entrants, this would be where their day would end after approximately 60km in the bag, having to catch the ferry back down the lake to Cynthia Bay.

Leaving the Narcissus checkpoint, the final 18km of the run would be spent trying not to trip over tree roots with our now heavy feet as we sidled Lake St Clair before the track widened at Watersmeet for the final 1.5km dash to the finish line.

Line honours for the day went to the in-form Stu Gibson who ran a PB and only the 10<sup>th</sup> sub 8 hour race in Cradle Mountain Run history (7:59:52). For the females, Gill Fowler came across the line first in 9:28:24, an hour clear of Katherine Macmillan in second place. The final runner would cross the line a tick after 9pm, 15 hours after we left Waldheim.

Well done to all entrants for 2014; although the track was dry and fast, it was a tough day in the office once the temperature began to rise. Also a huge well done and thank you to the CMR committee who put on yet another fantastic race day and weekend!

Phil Beeston