

The Icelandic Adventures of Mad Mary plus Jacky the Brave

Following her meanderings on the Moor of Pigs, Mad Mary plus Jacky the Brave (so-called because she agreed to accompany Mad Mary despite warnings of her outlandish snoring and snail-like pace) made the debatable decision to do the Iceland OMM.

Having packed their overnight, camping gear, suntan lotion and wet weather wear, Mad Mary and Jacky the Brave set off on their journey to the great glaciers and vast, and sometimes impenetrable, lava fields of the Iceland OMM; (Shades of Frodo and Samwise had nothing on the terrain that they were to tackle) armed only with jelly babies, protein bars, water bladder, waterproofs and cross-country trainers – and, on Mad Mary's part – her trusty camera. (Sorry Jacky) Alas and alack, EasyJet would not let Mad Mary bring her shopping trolley as hand-luggage, despite the fact she said she was going to Iceland.

On arrival at the Saturday Start at Grindavik in the low cloud and rain, the pair were bewildered to find that the map left a tad to be desired. Further, with shades of previous Mountain Marathons many years ago, they had to mark on the controls from a master-map and there were no dibbers in sight. (The mighty King Dibber now being overall ruler of all orienteering events large and small)

Having boldly marked up their maps and clutching their A4 sheet of control descriptions, and after pinning her tyvek control punchcard onto her top in order to keep it warm and dry, Mad Mary and Jacky the Brave set off on their epic journey. Unlike in the American Werewolf in London, they were utterly forbidden to place even a toe on the tarmac of the road but had to move along the hard – in this case very soft and crumbly – shoulder.



Lupin-land on the outskirts of Grindavik.

Quickly passing through lupin-land – click, click went Mad Mary’s camera – they soon reached the first track off to the left and daringly started out along it; albeit having to dodge a convoy of some 20 quad-bikes also making for the hills.



Jacky the Brave and the untouchable road

The debatable accuracy of the map soon deteriorated and Mad Mary and Jacky the Brave marched on into lava-land, in the fond hope of finding ‘the bottom of a crater on a hill’; their first control. Oh woe is me and alack and alas; the network of tracks – not shown on the map – deceived them into turning right too early and the mighty hill with the crater of top – please note this was not the Surrey with the Fringe on Top – loomed up upon the wrong side of the track according to the map. Therefore, instead of being sensible and climbing this hill in search of a crater, the pair went to the right up a fearsome scree; scrambling up on all fours as the gale-force winds angrily forbade an upright mode of travel.

At last, whoopee and joy, the top was reached and, on looking down the ascent, Jacky the Brave discerned a hill with a crater on top just to the left of the track upon which the pair had so long ago travelled. Nonetheless, the first control was reached with, if not glee, then at least gladness. The next two controls were captured and then it was down and across lumpy lava with numerous holes waiting to snag the unwary; the rain still raining and the wind still winding. Mad Mary continued to take photos, however, including one of Jacky the Brave at the top of the scree slope and, again, crossing the dry lake-bed to the control – chance finally to run/joggle there and back – hip, hip hurray.



From this arid area a final push was made to the FINISH OF THE FIRST DAY; Mad Mary and Jacky the Brave being now soaked, tired and hungry but jubilant; even if they had an hour in hand.



Oh bliss and frumpious joy; the campsite comprised a horizontal area of tall, sweet grass; a wooden hut with two, FLUSHING toilets; and a covered cooking area with two sinks. Out of the driving rain and howling wind, Mad Mary and Jacky the Brave cooked their meal and, a little later, were tucked up like interlocking spoons in their two-man tent.

The next day brought new trials and terrors. Starting with the control at the 'bottom of the crater on a hill', which they had missed the day before, Mad Mary and Jacky the Brave marched onwards, ever onwards. Soon, Jacky the Brave – now to be called Jacky the eagle-eyed – spotted the control leering at them across a lava field. Nonetheless, they yomped – or at least, in Mad Mary's case – staggered across to the control.



Control behind big rock at bottom of crater

Undeterred, Mad Mary and Jacky the Eagle-eyed, continued towards their next control. Again, woe and gnashing of teeth. The track upon which they were happily – well, relatively easily – walking was NOT ON THE MAP; the correct track was some 300 metres, and at the bottom of the shoulder, to the right but Jacky the Eagle-eyed eventually spotted it and so across to the next control went the intrepid – but now very wet – pair. (I forgot to mention that it was still down with rain and with a strong wind)

That evil being, Time, caught them out again and so Mad Mary and Jacky the Eagle-eyed were forced to cross yet another ridge to descend to the side road – upon which they were allowed to place their soggy feet. This meant that they had to abandon attempting to reach the control on top of Mount Doom, which was clearly visible to their right as seen below.



Valiant mossy saxifrage growing on a lump of lava.

A penultimate control along a track and then across the Devil's Lava field; thanking the gods of Asgard that there was now a tarmac path across it.

Finally, and yippee, hurray, yahoo, there, in front of Mad Mary and Jacky the Eagle-eyed, stretched the object of their quest – the mythical Blue Lagoon; warmth, dry clothes, food, swimming costumes and then warm water and alcohol – drinks being served at the edge of the lagoon.

So the quest of Mad Mary and Jacky the Eagle-eyed – formally Jacky the Brave – had ended in success and booze, if not a lot of points but THERE WERE SOME TEAMS WITH FEWER POINTS THAN THEIRS.

Would I do it again; of course I would but please, please, please, please with a better map!

Enjoy your orienteering,

Mad Mary and Jacky the Eagle-eyed