

Passchendaele – the 8 hour report

Due to a combination of illness (Tim), injury (Paul), self-preservation for an imminent orienteering carnival (Tim) and total lack of training (Tim & Paul), we opted for the 8-hour event at this rogaine. This was probably a good decision as we enjoyed the time out – but another 16 hours would have hurt – a lot!

Unlike the newlyweds who took out the 15 hour rogaine, we're somewhat at the other end of the spectrum – this was to be our 25th rogaine together. Our first as a team was the Ipswich Metrogaine in 1996 (Tim's first but about #37 for Paul). There followed regular participation in various rogaines with a spectacular number of outright seconds – we finally broke through for a win in last year's 24hr.

We set out for Passchendaele early on the Saturday morning with a breakfast stop at the Esk bakery (we're practically regulars here after organising the 12 hour event earlier in the year), arrived on-site in good time and, after catching up with a few people only seen at rogaines, were set up and ready to go. Course planning went smoothly – we identified a route of just under 30 km which had a steady stream of high-point controls which included options to shorten or lengthen the course. There was the usual discussion of how much water to carry, whether to take a rain jacket (yes!) and then we were ready to go.

At midday we set off with the usual cast of thousands – in our case south towards 60. The area was open so we had a good view of where we were headed and were soon at the control (although it might have been trickier in the dark as the spur was vague). With most heading up the hill to 72, we opted for a change of plan and took the flatter route (but same point gain) via 56 and 22 before meeting people again at 95. At this stage it was obvious that Paul was having a few calf issues – I rarely power ahead at this stage of a rogaine but fortunately things soon settled.

We were now in our usual groove of walking at a good steady pace, keeping mistakes to a minimum and, in this type country, mostly staying on a straight line. After 82 it was up the hill to Piper's Dodge (thanks for the views) then down to the water point – well ahead of our expected 4km/hr travel plan. With few problems we continued through 84 (good track walk), 61, 47(happy to get out of some thicker stuff), 94, 75, 65(nice caves), 85, 50 and 70. Our expectation was to be here around dusk but, with plenty of daylight left, we added 51 to the plan before continuing on to 80 and 37, reaching 90 as darkness set in.

With just under two hours to go, we'd completed our plan (plus 51) and decided to add a loop to the SE taking in 58, 81 and 25. This was incident free until about two-thirds of the way between 58 and 81 where we had apparently crossed a creek, then found a bull that took more than a passing interest in us (tactical retreat across a fence) and walked into a bog that added kilos to each foot (solved by the wet grass shortly after). However there was little doubt where we were and soon the expected dam was in view and the control found. After picking up 25 (fence corner not end of creek, note to self - read descriptions) we were back at the hash with about 30 minutes to spare.

Overall it was a good effort – we walked consistently with only a 5-10 minute break at the water stop and made little in the way of navigational errors. We estimate a straight line distance of 32 km and actually walking distance around 35 km for a total of 1440 points.

Thanks to Paul Guard and the team for a great rogaine – there were certainly some trials and tribulations in that process but fortunately it all came together well. Thanks also to the landowners for allowing us access to such a great area and for all the assistance provided to the organisers. I'm always amazed (but thrilled) at the generosity of these people.

Tim McIntyre, Paul Frylink